FAMILIAR ESSAYS OF TO-DAY

BENJAMIN A. HEYDRICK

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Familiar essays of today

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FAMILIAR ESSAYS OF TO-DAY

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

BENJAMIN A. HEYDRICK

HEAD OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, HIGH SCHOOL OF COMMERCE
NEW YORK CITY

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THE FAMILIAR ESSAY

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And just what is a familiar essay?

Let us suppose that a group of literary men are crossing the ocean on the same vessel. Let us suppose that each one, moved by the experience, seeks to express himself in his own way. The first is a poet. Inspired by the majesty of the ocean, he writes:

> Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll,
> Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain.

So perhaps Byron wrote his "Apostrophe to the Ocean." Another writer is a dramatist. Going down into the hold and seeing the half-naked stokers at work, and contrasting them with the care-free passengers, he finds drama, and writes a play. So Eugene O'Neill wrote *The Hairy Ape*. A third is a writer of fiction. His imagination is caught by the marvel of all the machinery of the ship moving together in harmony, and he writes a story about it. So Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Ship That Found Herself*.

The fourth in the group is an essayist. He takes as his subject *On an Ocean Voyage*. Like the poet, he has felt the beauty of the sea, and in one paragraph he expresses that beauty in prose. Like the story writer, he introduces certain characters into his essay, and talks about them. Or he may let them talk, as the dramatist does, but only for a page or so. There will probably be touches of humor, and certainly the author's comment upon what he has seen. And so an essay is made.

▼

The familiar essay, then, is a form of writing which touches the borders of poetry, of fiction, of drama, yet it is none of these things. It differs chiefly in what may be called the position of the author. In a play, the author does not appear at all, nor is his personality revealed. We read *The Merchant of Venice* but it tells us nothing about Shakespeare. In fiction the same is true: we see the characters and the setting, but the author is not in the picture. In poetry we sometimes get a glimpse of the poet, especially in lyric poetry; in narrative and descriptive poetry he is invisible again. But in the essay we are right at the author's elbow; we see with his eyes; we even know what he is thinking. In all other forms of literature, the author is either entirely absent or is vaguely seen near the edge; in the essay he stands squarely in the middle of the picture. This then is the distinctive characteristic of the familiar essay, that it reveals the personality of the author. We learn his likes and dislikes, his beliefs, his fancies, his hobbies, his opinions on all sorts of things. Through the essays in this book the word "I" runs like a refrain. The essay is of all forms of writing the nearest to autobiography.

Another characteristic of the essay is flexibility. It may change in mood, from serious to humorous, and back to serious again. It may begin with the author's meditations, and then introduce a bit of narrative. It may even change its subject, and go wandering down any by-way that looks attractive. In a word, an essay is like good talk: it is personal, it is interesting, it is continually changing.

From these remarks it may seem that the essay is a very easy thing to write; one need not follow any plan, or even keep to his subject; it seems as if any one could do it. But

as a matter of fact, the essay is not easy to write. There are probably four people who can write a good story to one who can write a good essay. And the reason for this lies partly in what has just been said about the essay as revealing the author's personality. Suppose this personality, when revealed, is rather thin and commonplace, what then? The essayist must be in the centre of the picture: how will he look there? Can every one stand the spot-light? It is evident that to write an interesting essay one must really be an interesting person. The would-be essayist must be a person with a flavor of his own. This tang, this individuality, this uniqueness, is what he imparts to his writings, and lacking this, he cannot become an essayist.

The second requisite that the writer of essays must possess is the gift of style. In a story, a good plot may cover up a poor style; not so in an essay. It demands the best a writer can give. Again and again in the lives of the authors whose essays form this book you will find references to the care they took in writing. The search for the right word, the recasting of sentences to make them express the thought more clearly or more pointedly or more musically, the finding of a beginning that will awaken interest and set the tone of the whole composition, as the opening chords of a symphony suggest the music to come; the closing passage, often recalling the beginning, and bringing the whole to a natural and harmonious ending: these are what essay-writing demands of those who practise it. One may almost say there is no such thing as a poorly written essay; if it is poorly written, it is not an essay.

The essay has its limitations, of course; it cannot reach the topmost heights of poetry, nor sound the depths of

which tragedy is capable, nor does it give as wide a scope for creative power as does the novel. But in its own field, for recording the thoughts and feelings of the individual, giving an interpretation of life as seen from one's own particular angle, it is a perfect medium.

One feels in reading these essays that the authors enjoyed writing them. And may you enjoy reading them.

BENJAMIN A. HEYDRICK.

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IN BELSHAZZAR COURT

SIMEON STRUNSKY

SIMEON STRUNSKY

Simeon Strunsky (1879–) is a man who is very reluctant to give any information about himself. When the editor of *The Bookman* wrote to him saying he was sending one of their writers to interview him for the magazine, as they had done for other well-known authors, Mr. Strunsky replied as follows:

"Between you and me, I don't know what use a newspaper man who works where they make it has for publicity, but I suppose I owe it to my descendants. I appreciate your and Mr. Werner's feeling the thing worth while, only I do shrink from anything in the personal, people-in-the-public-eye and I-do-my-work-in-the-early-morning-with-my-left-hand-resting-on-the-head-of-a-favorite-collie sort of thing. If Mr. Werner cares to write about me as if I were dead or in Tanganyiki, all right."

But in spite of this reticence, a few facts about Mr. Strunsky have become public. His birthplace was Vitebsk, Russia. The family came to America when Simeon was a child; like many emigrants from Russia, they landed at New York and stayed there. Simeon attended the Horace Mann School, a preparatory school connected with Columbia University. His fine record here won him a Pulitzer scholarship at Columbia. While in college he contributed to *The Columbia Monthly*. He graduated in 1900, winning a Phi Beta Kappa key for high scholarship.

His first literary work was as a member of the editorial staff of *The New International Encyclopedia*. After several years of this useful if rather dry occupation, he turned to journalism, joining the staff of the New York *Evening Post*. In addition to his work as a reporter, every Saturday he wrote brief essays on whatever interested him, under the heading *The Patient Observer*. During the World War he was military critic for *The Post*. Later he left this paper to take a position with the New York *Times*. His impressions of newspaper work may be guessed from a passage in his novel, *Professor Latimer's Progress*, where he has one of his characters, an editor, say that

newspapers do not show us people as they are but as they wish to appear. "We are the family photographers of the world, and people come to us in their Sunday clothes. If they didn't, we'd retouch them anyhow."

Mr. Strunsky's writings include four volumes of essays, *The Patient Observer, Post-Impressions, Belshazzar Court,* and *Sindbad and His Friends,* and a rambling novel, *Professor Latimer's Progress.*

IN BELSHAZZAR COURT*

SIMEON STRUNSKY

Our apartment-house has all-night elevator service. We have grown accustomed to being awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of violent hammering on the iron door of the elevator shaft, the object of which is to attract the attention of the operator, who is in the habit of running up his car to the top floor and going to sleep in the hall, being roused only with the greatest difficulty. Tenants have complained of the inconvenience; especially when one comes home late from an after-theatre supper at a Broadway hotel. In deference to such complaints our elevator boys are constantly being discharged, but the tradition of going to sleep on the top floor seems to be continuous.

One of the reasons for this, I imagine, is that our landlord underpays his help and is consequently in no position to enforce discipline. However, I speak almost entirely on information and belief, my personal experience with the all-night elevator having been confined to a single instance. That was when we came back from our vacation last summer at an early hour in the morning and rang the bell without eliciting any response. Inasmuch as we live only two flights up, we walked up the stairs, I carrying a suit-case, a hand-bag and the baby, and Emmeline carrying another suit-case and leading by the hand our boy Harold, who was fast asleep.

During the day our elevator is frequently out of order. The trouble, I believe, is with the brake, which every little while

*From *Belshazzar Court*, by Simeon Strunsky, copyrighted by Henry Holt and Company.

fails to catch, so that the car slides down a floor or two and sticks. It is quite probable that if our elevator boys remained long enough to become acquainted with the peculiar characteristics of the machinery in Belshazzar Court such stoppages would come less often. But no serious accidents have ever occurred, to my knowledge, and personally, as I have said, I suffer little inconvenience, since it is no trouble at all to walk up two flights of stairs.

But it is different with Emmeline, who worries over the children. She will not allow the baby to be taken into the car. Instead, she makes the nurse ride up or down with the go-cart, and has her fetch the baby by the stairs. Emmeline complains that in cold weather this necessitates her own going downstairs to tuck the child into her cart, a duty which cannot possibly be delegated. It also exposes the baby to draughts while she is being taken out of the cart in the hall, preparatory to being carried upstairs. But Emmeline would rather take that chance than have the elevator drop with baby, as happened twice during the first week after we moved in. I have sometimes argued with her on the subject, maintaining that there cannot be any real danger when the safety of the elevator is guaranteed by no less than three casualty companies; but Emmeline says that is a detached point of view which she cannot share. Our boy Harold is under strict injunctions to walk. He finds it a deprivation, after having twice tasted the joy of being marooned between floors, whence he was rescued by means of a ladder.

It is on account of the large bedrooms that we selected this particular apartment-house and cling to it in spite of certain obvious disadvantages. That is, there is really one bedroom only which can be called very large, but it has a fair amount

of sunlight and it faces on an open court. Harold has the music-room, which landlords formerly used to call the back parlor. It faces on the avenue and makes an excellent sleeping-room and play-room for the boy. Such rooms are almost impossible to find in a tolerable neighborhood for the really moderate rent we pay. That is, my rent is just a little more than I can afford; nevertheless you would think it reasonable if you saw what a fine appearance our apartment-house makes. It has a façade in Flemish brick, with bay windows belted by handsome railings of wrought iron upon narrow stone balconies. It also has a mansard cornice painted a dull green, which is visible several blocks away over the roofs of the old-fashioned flats by which our house is surrounded.

Our friends, when they come to see us for the first time, are impressed with Belshazzar Court. You pass through heavy grilled doors into a marble-lined vestibule which is separated by a second pair of massive doors from the spacious main hall. This hall is gay with an astonishingly large number of handsome electroliers in imitation cut glass. There is also a magnificent marble fireplace in which the effect of a wood fire is simulated by electric bulbs under a sheet of red-colored isinglass. The heat is furnished by a steam radiator close by. The floor has two large Oriental rugs of domestic manufacture. There is a big leather couch in front of the fireplace. Everywhere are large, comfortable arm-chairs in which I have often thought it would be pleasant to lounge and smoke, but I have never had the time. On a mahogany table, in the centre, the day's mail is displayed. I have sometimes glanced over the letters in idle curiosity and found that they consist largely of circulars from clothing firms and dyeing establishments. The chan-

deliers usually have a number of the crystal prisms broken or missing. The rugs are fairly worn, but doubtless the casual visitor does not notice that. The general effect of our main hall is, as I have said, imposing. Sunday afternoons there are several motor-cars lined up in front of the house.

The number of young children in our apartment-house is not large, a dozen or fifteen, perhaps. The house has six stories and there are nine apartments to the floor, so you can figure out for yourself the rate of increase for the population of Belshazzar Court. My own contribution to the infant statistics of our apartment-house is apparently between one-sixth and one-eighth of the total number. Moreover, if you calculate not by mere number but by the amount of vital energy liberated, my own share is still larger. For there is no denying the justice of the hall boys' complaint that our Harold creates more disturbance in the house than any other three children. The missing prisms in the hall chandeliers are in considerable degree to be attributed to Harold. Not that he has a predilection for electroliers. He is just as hard on shoes and stockings. The former he destroys in a peculiar manner. As he walks upstairs, he carefully adjusts the upper of his shoe, just over the arch, to the edge of each step, and scrapes toward the toe slowly but firmly. When in good form he can shave the toes from a new pair of shoes in a single afternoon, and I have known him to reduce his footgear, within a week, to a semblance of degraded destitution that is the despair and mortification of his mother.

However, it must not be supposed that Harold is unpopular with the working staff of Belshazzar Court. The only apparent exception is the house superintendent, who is

held responsible for all damage accruing to halls and stairways. His point of view is therefore quite comprehensible. But even the bitter protests of the house superintendent are not, I imagine, a true index to his permanent state of feeling with regard to Harold. At least I know that after the superintendent has called up Emmeline on the telephone to complain of Harold's fondness for tracing patterns on the mahogany hall table with a wire nail, the boy has been found in the cellar watching the stoking of the furnace with bated breath, a privilege conferred on but few. The superintendent has also given Harold the run of a great pile of cinders and ashes which occasionally accumulates near the furnace doors. From such excursions the boy returns with the knees of his stockings entirely gone, and only the blue of his eyes discernible through a layer of coal dust which lends him an aspect of extraordinary ferocity.

And yet I believe it is Harold's clamorous career through life that is the secret of his popularity with the people in our house. When he walks down the stairs it sounds like a catastrophe. He engages in furious wrestling bouts with the hall boys, whose life he threatens to take in the most fiendishly cruel manner. His ability to "lick" the elevator boy and the telephone operator single-handed is an open secret to any one who has ever met Harold. But as I have said, there are very few children in the house, and I imagine that the sound of him engaging in mortal combat with the elevator boy and the clatter of his progress down the stairs echo rather gratefully at times through the long, sombre hallways.

I am an eyewitness of Harold's popularity on Sunday mornings when Emmeline and I, with both the children,

ride down in the elevator for our weekly stroll along the Boulevard. My bodily presence on Sunday so far removes my wife's apprehensions with regard to the elevator that she will consent to take the baby down in the car. On such occasions I have observed that our neighbors invariably smile at Harold. Sometimes they will ask him how soon and in just what way he intends to destroy the new hall boy, or they will reach out a hand and pluck at his ear. The women in the car content themselves with smiling at him.

Harold's friends, who thus salute him on Sunday morning, usually carry or lead a small dog or two which they are taking out for the daily exercise. There are a large number of small dogs in our apartment-house. I don't pretend to know the different breeds, but they are nearly all of them winsome little beasts, with long, silky pelts, retroussé noses, and eyes that blink fiercely at you. Their masters are as a rule big, thick-set men, well advanced toward middle age, faultlessly dressed, and shaven to the quick. Or else the small dogs repose in the arms of tall, heavy women, who go mercilessly corseted and pay full tribute to modern requirements in facial decoration. They seem to lay great store by their pets, but they also find a kind glance for Harold. Sometimes I imagine it is a different glance which they turn from their little dogs to Harold —a softer look, with the suggestion of wonder in it. From Harold and the baby they usually glance at Emmeline. I pass virtually unnoticed.

I have mentioned the baby. When she is with us, Harold does not monopolize our neighbors' attention. It would be odd if it were otherwise. I am not so partisan as Emmeline

in this matter, but I am inclined to think she is right when she says that our baby's eyes, of a liquid grayish-blue, staring in fascination out of the soft, pink swell of her cheeks, cannot help going straight to the heart of every normally constituted bystander. The women with small dogs in their arms smile at Harold, but they will bend down to the baby and hold out a finger to her and ask her name. Under such circumstances the behavior of Emmeline is rather difficult to explain. She is proud and resentful at the same time. Her moral judgments are apt to be swift and sharp, and when we are alone she has often characterized these neighbors of ours—the women, I mean—in pretty definite terms. Her opinion of women whose interests are satisfied by a husband and a toy dog would please Mr. Roosevelt, I imagine. Yet she never fails to tell me of the extraordinary charm our baby exerts on these very people whose outlook upon life and æsthetic standards she thoroughly despises.

I have a confession to make. Sometimes, during our encounters in the elevator with our close-shaven, frock-coated neighbors and their fashionably dressed wives, I have looked at Emmeline's clothes and made comparisons not to her discredit but to my own. I should like Emmeline to cut as fine a figure as her neighbors, occasionally. Our neighbors' wives on a Sunday are dazzling in velvets and furs and plumes, whereas Emmeline has a natural disinclination for ostrich feathers even if we could afford to go in for such things. Her furs are not bad, but they are not new. They have worn well during the four years she has had them; nevertheless they are not new.

I am not hinting at shabbiness. That is the last thing you would think of if you saw Emmeline. An exquisite clean-

liness of figure, a fine animation in the eyes and the cut of her lips, an electric youthfulness of gesture—I know that clothes are vanity, but sometimes, on Sundays, I am seized with an extraordinary desire for velvets and feathers and furs. I feel that there must be a certain spiritual tonic in the knowledge of being splendidly overdressed. It is a plunge into outlawry which has its temptations to quiet people like myself who would never dare to put on a red tie. I sometimes wonder if the ancient Greeks, with all their inborn taste for simplicity in line and color, did not occasionally go in for a sartorial spree. I really do not regret the fact that I cannot afford to give Emmeline a sealskin coat and a hat with aigrettes. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred I should feel uneasy to see her thus arrayed. But occasionally, yes, occasionally, I should like it.

Frequently I catch myself wondering how the others can afford it. I take it that even when you make due allowance for the New York temperament it is fairly safe to assume that people living in the same apartment-house occupy the same economic level. There are exceptions, of course. Tucked away in some rear-court apartment you will find people whose bank accounts would amaze their neighbors. But these are precisely the ones who make the least display. They are maiden ladies of native American descent and the last of their line; or the widows of Tammany contractors and office-holders who divide their time between works of piety and a cat; or prolific German families of the second generation living after the sober traditions of the race. Still, I feel sure that the majority of our neighbors in Belshazzar Court are in the same income class with myself. How, then, can they afford it all—velvets, furs, the

Sunday-afternoon motor-car in front of the door? I put aside the obvious explanation, that there are no children. That would make a very considerable difference, but still —motor-cars, bridge three times a week for very considerable stakes, tables reserved at Shanley's for Election night and New Year's Eve——

"They *have* to afford it," says Emmeline, with that incisive justice of hers in which I should sometimes like to see a deeper tincture of mercy. "When you come to think of it, a little pink-nosed dog cannot fill up a woman's life. There must be other interests."

"In other words," I said, "they can't afford it. Do these people pay their bills?"

We used to call this a rhetorical question at college. My information on the subject is probably as good as Emmeline's. Five minutes of pleasant gossip with one's newsdealer is illuminating. Not that I am given to hanging over shop-counters, or that my newsdealer would be reckless enough to mention names. But since we are by way of being in the same line of business, I writing for the newspapers while he sells them,—and incidentally makes the better income of the two,—we do pass the time of day whenever I drop in for cigars or stationery. On such occasions, without quoting names, he will state it as a regrettable economic puzzle that so many people who ride in motor-cars should find it hard to pay their newspaper bills. There was one account, running up to something over eight dollars, he told me, that he was finally compelled to write down to profit and loss. The figures are instructive. Eleven cents a week—for it is an odd fact that people who ride in motor-cars read only the penny papers—makes for-

ty-four cents a month. Throw in an occasional ten-cent magazine and you have a total expenditure of say seventy or eighty cents a month. An unpaid newspaper bill of eight dollars would therefore argue a condition of acute financial embarrassment extending over a period of nearly a year.

My newsdealer's explanation was that garage bills must be paid with fair promptness and dinners at Shanley's must be paid for in cash, seeing that the demand is always greater than the supply. Whereas the competition among newsdealers is so sharp, and literature is on the whole a luxury so easily dispensed with, that the news vender must be content to wait for his bill or lose his customer. And he went on to say that there is serious talk among men in his line of business of organizing a newsdealers' benevolent and protective association for the enforcement of collections from customers living in elevator apartments.

"And then again," says Emmeline, "why shouldn't they be able to afford it? They don't eat."

She goes on to show that inevitably a house with no children in it is a house with very little good food in it. Emmeline has made a study of eugenics, and she has come to the conclusion that the purest milk and a lot of it, the juiciest steaks, and the freshest vegetables constitute the best preventive of a neurotic citizenship in the future. It is a principle which she lives up to so resolutely that our food bills would strike many people as staggering. Now appetite, Emmeline argues, is very susceptible to suggestion. People learn to eat by watching their young. It's like caviare. But where there are no children life may easily be sustained on soda crackers and a glass of milk.

And it is something more than that. (I am still para-

phrasing Emmeline's views.) A dining-room table with children's eager, hungry faces around it ceases to be a mere dining-room table and becomes an altar. Dinner is not a mere replenishing of the physiological furnaces; it partakes of the nature of a sacrament, with the mother as the high priestess, and the father,—well, let us call him the tithe-gatherer. Eating in common is a form of primitive nature-worship which the purest religions have taken over and sanctified. To break bread together—well, all this is quite obvious. But now try to think of a sacrament as being administered with a can-opener and a chafing-dish.

"That is what they live on," says Emmeline, "things that come out of tins and paper boxes. At the end of a year it means a fur coat." Which isn't really very convincing. A single after-theatre supper on Broadway will easily swallow up a week's frying-pan economies. But as an index of the attitude of those women who cook for their children to those women who have no children to cook for, Emmeline's opinion has its value. I admit that, being a woman, she is prejudiced, my own prejudices being to a very great extent the reflection of hers.

Emmeline has a hatred for gossip that is quite extraordinary in one who is so closely confined to her home by household duties. Hence you will wonder where she obtains her information, sometimes so startlingly intimate, regarding our neighbors' habits. Well, in the first place, Belshazzar Court is very much like those Russian prisons you read about, which hum and echo with news flashing along mysterious channels. The prison walls resound to ghostly taps in the still of the night. The water-pipes beat out their message. A handkerchief is waved at a window. A convict's

shackled feet, dragging along the corridor, send out the Morse code of the cell. So it requires no special gift of imagination to sit in one's apartment and reconstruct the main outlines of the life about you. The mechanical piano downstairs has its say. There is a scamper of young feet in the hallway above. A voice of exasperation rasps its way down the dumb-waiter. A sewing machine whirs its short half hour and is silent. Little yelping volleys announce meal-time for the silken-haired Pekinese. As night comes on, the lights begin to flash up, revealing momentary silhouettes, groups, bits of still life. The alarm clock in the morning and the heavy, thoughtful tread at midnight bespeak different habits and occupations. It is a world built up out of sounds.

There are the servants. They are the telegraph wires of apartment-house life. Like a good many telegraph wires in the great world outside, they are sadly overburdened with trivialities. Yet a healthy cook or nursemaid will pick up during a ten minutes' excursion to the roof an amazing mass of miscellaneous information. This information she insists upon imparting to you. At first Emmeline would refuse to listen, protesting that she did not care to be burdened with other people's affairs. But we soon learned that the one form of class-distinction which domestic help will not tolerate is a refusal to meet them on the common level of gossip. What makes the problem all the more difficult is that as a rule the best servants have the keenest appetite for petty scandal. Presumably a robust interest in one's own duties goes hand in hand with a healthy interest in the way other people are living up to their duty. Elizabeth, the only cook we have ever had who will not create a scene when

somebody drops in unexpectedly for dinner, simply oozes information. When I think of the secrets into which Elizabeth has initiated us with regard to our neighbors whom we have never met, I feel an embarrassment which is only relieved by the thought that these neighbors must be quite as well informed about ourselves.

Perhaps I should know more of our neighbors if the electric lights in our stately hallways did not burn so dimly. I have mentioned the handsome glass chandeliers in our main hall and vestibule. Unfortunately they give forth a faint, sepulchral light. Our elevator car, a massive cage of iron and copper, is quite dark. It may be that our landlord has artistic leanings and is trying to impart a subdued, studio atmosphere to his halls; very dim illumination being, I understand, the proper thing in advanced circles. Incidentally there must be a saving in electricity bills. At any rate, if you will take into consideration the fact that I have a habit of staring at people, even in broad daylight, without recognizing them, and if you will add to that the fact that a day's fussing over proofs and exchanges in the office is followed by an hour in the Subway over the evening papers, it is quite plain why I have difficulty in remembering the faces of neighbors whom I occasionally run across.

Most of the neighbors are very much the same way. An hour in the dead atmosphere of the Subway wilts the social virtues out of a man. We manage to make our way listlessly into the upper air. We trudge wearily through the handsome iron doors of our apartment-house. We take our places in opposite corners of the elevator car and stare up at the roof of the cage or count the floors as we pass. Three

or four of us leave at the same floor and go our several ways, I to number 43 on the right, one man to number 42 straight ahead, one to the left, and so forth. As I have said, there are nine apartments to the floor.

Emmeline insists that I should not read in the Subway. She says I ought to lean back and close my eyes and rest. But she forgets that the man you lean back upon is sure to protest. Lateral pressure enforces an attitude of extreme rigidity during the rush hour, and to stand up straight with one's eyes closed tight is obviously ridiculous. Even when I find a seat, I do not like to close my eyes. It gives people the impression that I am pretending to be asleep in order to avoid giving up my seat to a woman, and on that subject I have the courage of my convictions. An hour in the Subway can be made endurable only by some such narcotic as the evening papers afford; and when you have read through three or four papers, your eyes naturally show the strain.

Of course, if we stay long enough in Belshazzar Court, we shall make acquaintances. Accident will bring that about. For instance, there are a number of men in my line of work and the allied professions who meet every now and then in a little German café on the East side in the 'Eighties. It is not a club, since there are neither members nor by-laws nor initiation fees, nor, worst of all abominations, a set subject for papers and discussion. People simply drift in and out. We keep late hours, and it is a well-known fact that in the early hours of the morning friendships are rather easily formed. That was the way I met Brewster.

Brewster (I don't know his first name) is a tall, thin, sallow-faced man of thirty-five who looks the Middle West he

comes from. I had seen him at two of our meetings before we fell into talk. He spoke sparingly, not because he was shy, but because as a rule he had trouble in finding the right phrase. It was not until we were walking across town toward the Subway one night that I found out that Brewster is associate professor of mathematics at my old university. But he has ideas outside of Euclid. He is a Radical, he detests New York, and he is looking forward to the time when he can get away. But I imagine that he is not looking forward very eagerly. Your Radical loves the city while he curses it. At any rate, the Subway trains make speed at night and I was at my station before I knew it. Had he passed his own? No, it appeared that this was his station, too. That was pleasant, I said. Living in the same neighborhood I hoped we would see more of each other in the future. He said it would be pleasant indeed; his own address was Belshazzar Court. He had been there more than two years now. He lived on the third floor, in 47.

"That would be directly across the court from 43?"

He thought it was.

That was two weeks ago. We have not yet found the time to drop in on Brewster. But sometimes I catch a glimpse of him through the window-curtains of his dining-room. Of course I had seen his figure pass across the window before, but naturally had never looked long enough to fix his face in my memory. He has his two children and his unmarried sister in the apartment with him. The mother of the children is dead. The elder is a boy of seven, and I think he must be the pleasant-faced lad who on several occasions has rung our bell and complained that our Harold has robbed him of various bits of personal property—a toy

pistol, a clay pipe, and several college emblems of the kind that come in cigarette boxes.

That is all I know of Brewster directly. Emmeline knows a little more. She has it from our cook, who has it from Brewster's cook. He goes out very rarely. In the morning he escorts the little boy to a private school half a mile away. This he does on his way to the university. He comes home a little earlier than I do, usually with a grip full of books. Our cook says that Brewster is invariably present when his sister gives the little girl her bath before putting her to bed; the child is only two years old. The boy has his supper with his father and aunt, and it is Brewster himself who superintends his going to bed. This process is extremely involved and is marked by a great deal of rough-and-tumble hilarity. Late at night, as I sit reading or writing, I catch a glimpse of him over his work at the big dining-room table, correcting examination papers, I suppose, though I believe he does some actuarial work for an insurance company. He will get up occasionally for a turn or two about the room, or to fill his pipe, or to fetch from the kitchen a cup of tea which he drinks cold. I see him at work long after midnight.

Have I gone into all this detail concerning Brewster merely because he happens to live in 47, which is just across the court from 43, or because our habits and our interests really do touch at so many points? If Brewster were writing down his impressions of Belshazzar Court at midnight, with myself as the central figure, his story would be very much like mine. A glimpse into the windows of our dining-room would show me, too, in a clutter of papers, rustling through my exchange clippings, dipping into a volume of *Pickwick* for a moment's rest, striking innumerable matches

to keep a reluctant pipe agoing, and drinking cold tea,—too much cold tea, I am afraid.

Yes, Brewster and I have something in common. But then I wonder, if I were living one floor above, in 53, and chance had made me acquainted with Smith who lives across the court in 57, would Smith and I discover that there are human ties between us other than our dependence on the same central heating plant? For one thing, I know that the Smiths have a baby which frequently cries at night in unison with our own. Sometimes the Smith baby wakes up ours. Sometimes the initiative comes from our own side.

Because I drink so much cold tea before going to bed, I find it difficult to fall asleep. I lie awake and think of Belshazzar Court with a fondness that I cannot muster at any other time. The house offers me an extraordinary sense of security; not for myself, but for those who belong to me. It is a comfort to have one's wife and children snugly tucked away in one's own particular cluster of cells at the end of one's own obscure little passageway, where an enemy would need Ariadne's guiding thread to find them. The caveman must have felt some such satisfaction when he had stored his young and their mother into some peculiarly inaccessible rock cleft.

I suppose the dark is a favorable time for the recurrence of such primordial feelings. In the dark the need for human fellowship wells up to the surface. Athwart the partitions of lath and mortar, we of Belshazzar Court experience the warm, protective sensation which comes from huddling together against the invisible menaces of the night.

Decidedly, I must give up drinking so much cold tea.

My eyes to-morrow will show the strain. But it is wonderful, too, this lying awake and feeling that you can almost catch the heart-throb of hundreds, above you, below you, on both sides. My neighbors undergo a magic transformation. Deprived of individuality,—viewed, so to speak, under their eternal aspect,—they grow lovable. Belshazzar Court is transformed. In the day it is a barracks. At night it becomes a walled refuge, a tabernacle almost. The pulse of life beats through its halls with just enough momentum to make a solemn music which gradually overcomes the effects of the cold tea. Intermittent noises twist themselves into vague fugues and arabesques. Somewhere on the floor above, heavy footsteps go back and forth in leisurely preparation for bed. Somewhere across the court, people have returned from the theatre. Evidently they are still under the exhilaration of the lights and the crowd. They pass judgment on the play and their voices are thoughtlessly fresh and animated, considering how late it is; but somehow you are not disturbed. With utter lack of interest you hear a child's wail break out—it is the Smith baby—and you hear the mother's "hush, hush," falling into a somnolent, crooning chant. Outside, a motor-car starts into life with a grinding and a whir and a sputter, and you set yourself to follow its receding hum, which becomes a drone and then a murmur and then silence, but you are not sure whether it is yet silence. As you are still wondering there comes the end of things, except that now and then you stir to the clamor of the elevator bell, ringing indignantly for the boy who has run the car up to the top floor and gone to sleep in the hall.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

In our larger cities, few families have a house to themselves. One huge building houses twenty, fifty, or a hundred families. If this building has no elevator, it is called a "walk-up." You understand the term after you visit some one on the top floor. If it is more than six stories, it usually has an elevator, and is dignified by the name of apartment-house. Simeon Strunsky, when a newspaper man in New York, lived in an apartment-house, which he calls Belshazzar Court, making fun of the high-sounding titles which such houses often bear.

A quiet, delightful humor plays all through this essay. Where do you note the first touch of it?

The paragraph beginning "Our friends" (page 6) describes the hall of the apartment-house. What things are mentioned as being an imitation of something else? Is Harold an imitation boy or a real boy? Why was he popular with other people in the house?

In what respects does Strunsky criticise the other tenants in the house? How near does he live to Brewster? How often does he go to see him?

In general, judging from this essay, is an apartment-house a desirable place to live in? Why, or why not?

Below are some subjects which might be treated in a light way, as Mr. Strunsky has done it. Try one of these on your writing pad.

Do We Know Our Neighbors?
The Sounds and the Smells in Our Apartment-House.
A House to Ourselves.
A Small Boy and His Doings.
Other People's Babies.
My Neighbor Over the Way.

If you liked this essay, get the volume from which it is taken —the book is called *Belshazzar Court,* and read something else. There is a good essay on baseball, called "The Game." Other

volumes of his essays are mentioned in the sketch of his life. There are also other essayists who, like him, treat of every-day things in an entertaining fashion. Some of their books are: *Powder of Sympathy,* by Christopher Morley; *The View Vertical,* by Winifred Kirkland; *Wild Goslings,* by William Rose Benet; *Things That Have Interested Me,* by Arnold Bennett; *Detours,* by Philip S. Marden; *The Romance of the Commonplace,* by Gelett Burgess, *Endicott and I,* by Frances Lester Warner, and *Hunting a Hair Shirt,* by Aline Kilmer.

R. F. D.

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

Walter Prichard Eaton, as he tells us in the essay printed here, was born at Malden, near Boston, in 1878. Naturally he went to Harvard, graduating in 1900. Like many other writers, he began as a newspaper reporter, on the staff of the Boston *Journal*. Later he became dramatic critic on the New York *Tribune* and *Sun*. He has been a frequent contributor to magazines, writing studies of the theatre or essays on nature. He has published several books on the drama, including *Plays and Players* and *The Actor's Heritage*. His interest in outdoor life led to the writing of a number of Boy Scout books, such as *Boy Scouts in the Berkshires, Boy Scouts in the White Mountains,* and others. He has also written several volumes of short stories, including *The Man Who Found Christmas* and *An Idyll of Twin Fires*. Twin Fires is the name of his home at Sheffield, Mass., in the Berkshire Hills.

From there he sends this note of explanation of his essay:

"'R. F. D.' as well as most of the other essays in *Green Trails and Upland Pastures,* was really a collaboration with Walter King Stone, the artist. Mr. Stone used to live near me in the Berkshire Hills, and together we used to climb mountains, hunt for birds' nests, and roam the countryside and woods. As we wandered he was always looking for what would make good pictures, and of course I was interested in what I could make an essay about; and when we found something he could paint and I could write, then we got to work, and presently the editor of *Harper's Magazine,* or *Country Life,* or *Scribner's,* found an illustrated article on his desk. We produced three books by this method—*Barn Doors and Byways, Green Trails and Upland Pastures,* and *In Berkshire Fields*. But Mr. Stone doesn't live in the Berkshires any more, and without him and the stimulation of his lovely illustrations, I no longer find it fun writing nature essays. Besides, the R. F. D.

man now has a six-cylinder sedan, and he makes his rounds with speed and comfort, and the romance has gone out of his job.

"Or maybe it just seems so to me. We older people are forever saying the romance has gone out of this or that merely because things have changed. It is the job of the young writer, always, I suppose, to keep discovering a new romance, a fresh interest and excitement in life. I am persuaded that the best training for a young writer is daily practice, even if this practice isn't corrected by a teacher. Write a theme, however short, every day. That will compel you to look around and find the interest and excitement in your daily walks and associations. You will not be able to wait for the big events to come along. Thus you will learn to find 'copy' in your humble surroundings and common tasks, and thus you may become a writer who glorifies the world anew for your new generation."

Mr. Eaton's books of essays are *Barn Doors and Byways, Green Trails and Upland Pastures, In Berkshire Fields, Skyline Camps,* and *Penguin Persons and Peppermints.*

R. F. D.*

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

I NEVER write the initials, R. F. D., on the corner of an envelope, or see them written there, without a curious thrill, which I fancy must be shared by all country-bred Americans. Railroads, trolleys, motors, movies, magazines, the tremendous growth of our cities, have made us sophisticated, so that a large number of us have but the vaguest idea how the rest of us live, which sounds like a paradox but isn't. My boyhood, for example, was spent in a New England village less than fifteen miles from Boston, yet the North Parish, four miles away, was still only to be reached by a yellow stage coach slung on swaying straps, the partridges came for grain into our stable yard, and the lives of the farmers along the country roads were as well known to me as the cases of stuffed animals in the lobby of the old Boston Museum, where I went once a week to see the play, or the maze of alleys cutting across Cornhill, which I threaded to and from the station. To-day a trolley runs to the North Parish, and what once were back-country roads are now lined with suburban cottages. One farm is a golf club now! There is a movie theatre where an old Colonial house used to stand by the village green, the village trees have disappeared; the village, in fact, has disappeared. That sophisticated thing, a suburb, has displaced it, and the old democracy between town and country is no more. The present generation is sharply divided, and it is characteristic of

*From *Green Trails and Upland Pastures*, by Walter Prichard Eaton, copyrighted by W. A. Wilde Company.

the urban element to have very little consciousness that the other still exists. The self-sufficiency of our American cities is rather naïvely amusing, in fact.

Yet we have only to consult the records of the Post Office department to realize what a tremendous number of Americans are in communication with the cities solely by the aid of the Rural Free Delivery. Millions of people live in New York, who nearly perish with the cold on the rare occasions when the thermometer drops to zero. Their newspapers print long stories about it on the front pages. Yet up here in the hills where I live, not a hundred and fifty miles away, we go about our business with the mercury at twenty below—properly dressed for it, of course, which your city dweller never is; and one of our rural mail men, who is a woman, drives her plodding nag twice a day across the bitterly cold flats, wind-swept and drift-piled, carrying the messages from the outer world to the little hamlet under the mountain, cheerful as the chickadees in the evergreens beside the road. She has made that journey twice a day every day for more than twenty-five years, though sometimes a six-horse sled had to precede her to break the drifts. Scattered along her path are little white houses and big gray barns. In front of each house is a tin mail box on a post or tree. The rattle of her buggy wheels or the jingle of her sleigh-bells down the road proclaims her coming, and even if she bears no mail for the waiting box she bears a greeting and a bit of gossip for the housewife in the door. I see her pass out of our village every day, with her mail bags around her feet, and she seems to me a symbol of the simpler, rural America that was once so close to the consciousness of all of us, and which we are but now begin-

ning to realize must not be allowed to perish or we perish, too, the victims of a top-heavy industrialism and prohibitive food prices.

The Rural Free Delivery marks the outmost extension of our great postal service, and like all institutions on the frontier it is less mechanical and more human than the central portions of the system. In the city post offices, men are machines; mail wagons or motor trucks are juggernauts, letters are shot through tubes and sped toward their destination on trains. But the system is already less impersonal before the rural deliverer receives his pouches and packets. They are often given to him in a small office where familiarity reigns, and the postmaster or mistress peers at you as you enter the door, and has your letters waiting when you reach the little arched window. In such a post office may be found almost a current history of the village. In the windows are home-made posters announcing a church supper, a high-school basket-ball game, a political rally. On the bulletin board, and spilling from it out on the adjacent walls, are lost-and-found notices, gloves, hair ribbons, and other trifles picked up on the road and pinned here awaiting an owner, the tax collector's warning, the list of voters, a plea for soldiers to join the United States army, the fish and game laws, a colored picture of a gypsy moth, and the list of unclaimed letters for the week. Every one in the village comes to the post office, even if only for the reason that brought the old gentleman in Mr. Ade's fable, who went every day because in 1888 he got a seed catalogue. The post office is a social institution and a clearing house for information, no less than a means of distributing mail. It is from such an office that the Rural Delivery man sets out

whom we are about to follow. He will take us back into a world which some of us had almost forgotten.

This particular carrier still drives a buggy. Many of his fellows, especially those with long routes in regions where the winters are not severe nor the dry roads long delayed in spring, now employ one of those small, cheap automobiles that have been the admiration of the European armies. But our carrier is in a northern mountain region where as yet macadam is almost unknown, and a motor would be impracticable for more than four or at most five months in the year. He not only delivers along the route, but he carries the mail to the little post office far from the railroad at the end of his journey. That is in a leather sack or two at his feet. The route mail is on the seat beside him, along with a pile of private parcels, purchases he has been commissioned to make by those whom we had almost called his patients. His is an ordinary-looking buggy, and a somewhat less than ordinary-looking horse. He wears no uniform. Yet he and his outfit are mysteriously invested with the dignity of Uncle Sam. He is carrying the United States Mail, and though we call him Tom and have known him familiarly since boyhood, we would not dream of interfering with his journey. Somehow, for us, he represents the co-operative ideal made manifest. He is our servant—and our fellow townsman. To interfere with him would be to interfere with every citizen of the village, of the nation. It is easier to visualize democracy in the form of Tom Sherburn than that of a mail tube to the Grand Central Station!

Tom's buggy jogs down the village street and in under the shadow of the old covered bridge, where the cross

planking rattles loudly and there is a curious smell known to every one familiar with old covered bridges, and quite indescribable to anybody else. Inside the bridge are tin posters advertising liniment for man and beast, and up in the cobwebs hang wisps of hay caught from some passing load. Through the little square windows you catch a momentary glimpse of the brown river and bending willows—a pretty picture in a dusky frame. After the road has crossed the bridge, it follows up the side of the river, rapidly leaving the village behind, taking us toward the hills.

How gracefully the road swings with the curves of the stream, each bend ending one tree-shaded vista, and, once it is passed, beginning another! The brown water is visible always at our side, between the willows, the white birches, the swaying alders that dip their twigs into the rushing water in the spring. The soil is moist here, and tall meadow rue lines the road. Over the wall and beyond the fringe of trees on the opposite side from the stream are level fields of hay or corn, rich bottom lands with now and then stately vase elms marching across them along the bank of some hidden swale—once, perhaps, the bed of the river. The farmhouses here are prosperous, with big red barns, and the mail boxes are nailed to painted posts close beside the sandy road, with little red flags which are raised straight up in the morning, when mail is to be collected, as a signal to Tom. Nor is there much gossip here when the carrier comes by. The folk on these farms are too busy—and, perhaps, too near the village. It is a well-known law of physics that roadside gossip varies directly with the distance from town.

It is when the road begins to leave the river-bottom and

wind up the long hill toward the forested plateau that the farms lose their bustle and Tom pulls his old horse up for a moment under the shade of a big sugar maple, while a leisurely figure in the traditional straw hat comes to the split rail fence, or the stone wall, and holds converse. Has Tom seen a paper that morning? What are them German nuisances up to now? Is it true beans are forty cents a quart? Well, well, and he didn't put in more'n two rows, and might hev put in ten times as many more, seein's how he cut off the poverty birch last winter from the upper pasture and hed the poles, or could hev hed 'em, if he hadn't cut 'em up fer stove wood. What's goin' to be the end of this cost o' things, anyhow? It's gettin' so a man can't afford to buy grain for his cattle, and without no cattle, you ain't got no manure, and without no manure you can't keep up your land—and there you be! Having arrived at this melancholy predicament, and seeing no way out, he gazes across the valley fields below to the rising green wall of the hill beyond, while Tom flecks off a horse fly with his whip and adds his bit of complaint that Uncle Sam ain't raisin' his pay none, either, and the horse costin' more to feed every day.

Either the fleck of the whip or the mention of food causes the horse gently to move forward, and, thus reminded, Tom clucks to him and goes on up the road. But he seems quite cheerful when he reaches the last house up the hill, and stops to give Mrs. Sanborn her pound of tea and the bottle of medicine he promised to get for her when he went by early that morning. Few can be ill along the road without Tom knowing it, and not many without his learning, too, what brand of medicine they are taking. Mrs. Sanborn has

cramps, which is an extremely euphonious way of stating a desire for alcoholic stimulation, equally euphoniously supplied by Jamaica ginger. Mrs. Sanborn strongly disapproves of the cider drinking which goes on in the rural regions, especially of the custom, hallowed by tradition, of letting a barrel of hard cider freeze almost solid and then, on a winter night, boring a hole into the heart of the ice cake and extracting the highly stimulating unfrozen core. But Mrs. Sanborn's secret remains comparatively secure with Tom and the village druggist. "Live and let live" is still the motto in a land of individualists.

Tom is generally whistling again by the time he reaches the top of the long trail and enters the deep woods on the summit plateau. But his whistle ceases as the horse's hoofs sound less metallic on the damper ground, or in autumn swish and thud softly through the fallen leaves. Here in these woods, where the sunlight is dappled gold and there are dim green vistas, Tom likes to drive slowly, enjoying the cool shadows in summer, the hushed, windless calm in winter, and only in spring annoyed by the frost holes and black, mucky ruts. Here he sometimes surprises a deer, which bounds away through the forest, and almost daily a rabbit or two scamper across his path, or a partridge goes drumming up and whirs down an evergreen aisle. Tom was a mighty hunter in his younger days, and has never yet forgiven the state legislature for making it illegal for him to go out with a gun on the Sabbath (not, of course, that he doesn't go out with a gun on the Sabbath!). This drive through the woods appeals to some deep instinct within him, and his eyes become keen and youthful. He likes, too, in a less expressive way, the red bunchberries by the road,

the bloodroot and hepaticas of spring, the gentians in the late summer. He loves the ground pine trailing on the bank, the earthy smell, the distant hammer of a woodpecker, the sweet clarion of a hermit thrush. It seems almost as if such a man, passing daily through this timber with senses alert and instinctive sympathy with nature, might fashion a woodland lyric to the rhythmic plod of his horse's hoofs and the gentle sway of the buggy. So far as we know, however, Tom has never broken into verse. His nearest approach was his statement one day to a summer boarder in the big farmhouse down the hill on the other side.

"I seen the white tail of a deer go boundin' off through the balsams," he said, "like a snowball through a velvet veil."

The forest is, in reality, on the crest of a divide, and when the road emerges on the farther side a splendid prospect opens out. The road plunges abruptly down, past a sentinel pine and over a cascade of thank-you-marms, into a mountain intervale, an isolated community of little farms which is walled on the farther side by the upspringing green flanks of the major range. From the broader valley where Tom's journey began these mountains had not been visible, hidden by the foot-hills and the forest plateau. They come into the view with a dramatic suddenness, never quite the same under the changing play of mist and light and cloud-shadow upon them, and never seen, however often, without a secret thrill.

It is frequently twilight, in winter it may be quite dark, when Tom comes down the last slope into the hamlet which is journey's end. Perhaps a young moon is hanging in the

black tracery of the maple boughs and the village lights are golden across the snow. All his packages and letters have been distributed and only the sacks of mail at his feet are left. The usual familiar crowd is awaiting him, in summer under the porch in front of the store, in winter around the stove within. The post office is one corner of the "general store," barricaded off by a partition of numbered mail boxes like an artificial bee-hive comb, stood on end, except that it has a little window in the centre through which the postmaster peers. Tom tosses in the mail-sacks over the counter, and warms his hands at the stove, while his neighbors interrogate him regarding the state of the road. There is a curious smell in the store, of kerosene, coffee, grain, tobacco smoke, cotton cloth, bananas, and newly dampened woollen drying by the stove. Familiar faces come in out of the night; the mail is sorted; you hear the rustle of newspapers; and then the crowd fades away, following Tom who has gone home to put the horse in her stall and get his own supper.

Through summer and winter, through storm and shine, the rural carrier drives every morning over that route, and home again every afternoon—twelve miles from this mountain intervale to the little town by the railroad, and twelve long miles back again—bringing his messages from the larger world. It is a beautiful road he travels, but it may also be a severe one. The winter winds howl past that sentinel pine where the road breaks out of the forest; the drifts pile deep in the cuts and across the river flats. Tom knows from long experience exactly where he will encounter bare ground and where the snow will suddenly pack into diagonal ridges across the road, some rock or tree or wall

splitting the blast, so that his "pung" rides them like a boat on a choppy sea. Yet Tom and his old horse get the mail through. That is what Uncle Sam pays him for, and he harnesses up on a bitter morning, when the thermometer registers twenty below, with no thought of heroism, to make a twelve-mile trip which no automobile on earth could negotiate and which would probably put the average city dweller of to-day into the hospital for a month. In spring he splashes along through the mud; in the autumn, when the rains come down from the cloud-enveloped hills and the trees are lashed by the wind, we still see him jogging past, a humble but a human and a faithful cog in the great machinery of our government, linking up the old, pioneer America with the new.

Nowadays in summer he often meets automobiles bearing registration numbers of far states, drawn here by the lure of the mountains. But there are none in winter. They disappear before the white snow-caps on the range have crept down to timber; and by the time the world is on runners, Tom meets most often the sleds of the lumber men hauling the precious timber to the railroad, or bringing out the cord wood which makes the wise farmer independent of coal. Sometimes a load of hay on runners will go by, on its way to some farm where the supply has run low, and then Tom will have to turn out of the single track, nearly upsetting his pung as it dips in the drift, while the driver on top of the hay shouts a "Thank you!" He meets, too, the school barge, bringing in the children to the "centre school," and he has been known to have to dodge snowballs on such occasions. He meets a neighbor, now and then, wrapped up to the ears like himself, and slipping

along over the blue-shadowed road with jingling sleigh-bells. But always it is the simple life of the frontier country that he encounters, with its suggestion of a living wrung from the soil and a mode of existence dependent on the earth and its moods of wind and weather. It is not a sign of intellectual poverty that when Tom and a neighbor meet on the road one of them is almost sure to inquire: "Well, what's it goin' to do to-morrow?" If you had to make a round trip every day over Tom's route, in an open sleigh or buggy, you would ask the same question, with a good bit more anxiety in your tone, too, than he betrays when the northeast winds are piling the storm scud over the peaks of the range and trailing fingers of cloud down the slopes!

I am afraid it is the maintenance of Tom and his kind by the Government which has caused one interesting traveller almost to disappear from the country roads—the itinerant merchant. Some still exist, but they are growing fewer every year, as the great mail-order houses increase their range. I well remember one such merchant of my boyhood. He kept his wagon, between trips, in my grandfather's barn, and he was always familiarly known as "Mr. Wanamaker." This wagon, painted a gay red and yellow, was shaped like a huge box. A lid lifted behind the driver's seat, and disclosed such bulky objects as washboards, boxes of soap, and the like. The back of the wagon, however, was the fascinating part. Climbing out, "Mr. Wanamaker" (whose real name was Lovejoy, and he had ample Burnside whiskers which gave him a most benevolent expression) came around to the rear, like a butcher, and threw open a double door, while the farmer's wife, his daughters, and all and sundry female visitors, as well as the

children, gathered in an eager group. Behind the doors, arranged in the most skilful manner, were all the contents of a well-equipped dry-goods store. Everything was there, from the material for a new silk dress to garter elastic and spools of thread (the spools were kept in a tier of little drawers, I remember, which made a bright pattern of color when pulled out and displayed). There was always much rushing about and snipping of samples when "Mr. Wanamaker" drew near, and then a great matching of these samples against the spools of silk or cotton. His advice was regarded with great deference, I recall, and was always given in measured, judicial tones.

Then there was the tin peddler and ragman, too, who made periodical visits along the country roads. His cart, less spick and span than "Mr. Wanamaker's," was a curious contrivance, boxlike in front, with a rack behind in which were stowed the sacks of rags. Behind the driver, like yellow plumes, stuck up a row of new brooms. Smaller whisk brooms dangled from the sides, and shining pans were suspended, also, which flashed in the sun and rattled merrily on the rare occasions when the dejected horse consented to trot. But the tin peddler was no such elegant and eminent Anglo-Saxon person as Mr. Lovejoy. Business with him was conducted purely as business, and his thumb was carefully watched as he weighed the rags on the rusty scales which hung from the back of his wagon, giving a pot or a pan or a broom in exchange.

It was only a year or two ago that I encountered a Wanamaker on wheels, in a sleepy little hamlet in Rhode Island. But it has been many years since I have seen the genuine tin peddler and ragman of my boyhood. Doubtless the ru-

ral mail carrier has taken this job away from all such itinerant venders, and a picturesque feature of rural life has almost vanished. But the rural carrier himself still journeys, day in and day out, along thousands of pleasant country roads, through rain and shine, mud and drift, an unsung hero of faithfulness, a link between our modern interdependent industrial society and the simpler life of the pioneer, a reminder for all of us, when we write R. F. D. on a letter, that rural America still exists, and hundreds of thousands of our countrymen are still rural Americans, not "soft," as recent alarmists would have us believe, but hardy from their age-long battle with soil and tree and winter storm. The talk of "softness" emanates from city dwellers. If we were really soft as a nation, at any rate, a large part of our postal service would come to an abrupt halt. No man who was soft could make Tom Sherburn's trip, from January to December.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

The letters R. F. D. stand for Rural Free Delivery, the method by which 24,000,000 of our population get their mail. This essay was written during the World War, as one might guess from the reference to the Germans.

What is the usual attitude of city people toward country people? How are country people often shown in moving pictures? in cartoons?

What does Mr. Eaton think about city people as compared with country people? Quote a sentence about this. Does your own observation of country people confirm Mr. Eaton's view or not?

Of what does Mr. Eaton say the rural mail carrier is a symbol? Explain.

In this essay and the preceding one, two trained writers have

described the environment in which they live. Which makes the more interesting picture? Do both writers appear well satisfied with their surroundings? Compare Tom's daily ride in his buggy with Mr. Strunsky's daily ride in the Subway.

Life in an apartment-house and life in the country differ not only in surroundings but in human relations. What does Mr. Strunsky say about the relation of apartment-house dwellers toward their neighbors? What is the relation of country people toward their neighbors? What other contrasts are there between city and country life?

Midway between city and country lies the small town. If you live in one, or know one well, do you think the small town is more like the city or the country? What are some of the features of small-town life? If you do not know, get the book of short stories *In Our Town,* by William Allen White, or get *Hillsboro People,* by Dorothy Canfield, and read the first sketch, "At the Foot of Hemlock Mountain."

Below are some suggestions for composition subjects. Don't write about what you find in this essay, but tell what you have seen. Read what advice Mr. Eaton gives in the letter quoted in the sketch of his life.

A Country Post Office.
Rural Characters.
A Favorite Road.
Summer Visitors.
People in a Small Town.
A City Mail Carrier.
A Walk Through a City Street.
People at the Amusement Park.

If you have enjoyed this essay, get the book from which it is taken, *Green Trails and Upland Pastures,* and read the essay called "The Little Town on the Hill." Or try Mr. Eaton's recent book of essays, *Penguin Persons and Peppermints.* Or get one of Henry van Dyke's books dealing with nature, such as *Days Off* or *Little Rivers.* No one can make you feel the charm

of outdoors better than van Dyke. Or try one of Ray Stannard Baker's books, *Adventures in Friendship* or *The Friendly Road*. You will find the name David Grayson on the title page: he published his essays under that name. Another writer on outdoor subjects is Dallas Lore Sharp, author of *A Watcher in the Woods, The Face of the Fields,* and others. Stewart Edward White, writer, hunter, and camper-out, in *The Forest,* tells of his camp in the Sierras.

Can't find any of these? Then go to the library shelves and look for the number 814. There are all the American essays. Take down a book that shows it has been read; dip into it here and there, and see if it is for you. Browse around in this way, and you will find something good.

MARY WHITE

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

William Allen White, one of the best-known journalists in America, was born in Emporia, Kansas, in 1868. At that time Emporia was a hundred miles from a railroad. His parents moved to El Dorado, Kansas, and here he attended high school, afterward going to Emporia College for a year. Then he went to work as a printer's devil, and for several years by turns went to college and worked as a printer, and later as a reporter. When he had completed three years of college, he went to Kansas City as a reporter on the *Journal;* by the time he was twenty-four he was an editorial writer on the Kansas City *Star.* In 1895 he heard that the Emporia *Gazette* was for sale. He had not a cent of capital, but he bought the paper on credit, for $3,000. He has been its editor and proprietor ever since. An editorial of his called "What's the Matter with Kansas?" published in 1896, contained so much good sense put into vigorous English that it was copied in newspapers all over the country, giving him a wide reputation.

His first book, *The Real Issue,* was a volume of short stories. Some of these were about life in a small town, some about politics and some about small boys. These three subjects have been the themes of most of his other books. *Stratagems and Spoils* deals with politics; *In Our Town* with small-town life; *The Court of Boyville* with small boys. All three are books of short stories. *A Certain Rich Man,* a novel, is the story of how a small-business man grew to be a multi-millionaire. His next book, *The Old Order Changeth,* is a collection of essays dealing with the progressive and reform movements in our politics. During the World War, Mr. White went to France in the interests of the Red Cross. His later books are: *In the Heart of a Fool,* a novel; *Calvin Coolidge,* a biography; a life of Woodrow Wilson; and *Masks in a Pageant,* a series of pen-portraits of public men, such as Bryan, Roosevelt, Coolidge, and others.

Mr. White is one of the best-known journalists in the United States. He has received many offers to join the staff of great metropolitan papers, but prefers to be his own master and to live in a small town. An interesting essay about him is "The Citizen from Emporia," by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, in her book *Fire Under the Andes,* also reprinted in *Literary By-Paths,* by Bessey and Ryan.

MARY WHITE*

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

[William Allen White is the editor of the Emporia *Gazette.* His daughter Mary met a sudden death through an accident, and this is the account of her life which her father wrote for his paper.]

THE Associated Press reports carrying the news of Mary White's death declared that it came as the result of a fall from a horse. How she would have hooted at that! She never fell from a horse in her life. Horses have fallen on her and with her—"I'm always trying to hold 'em in my lap," she used to say. But she was proud of few things, and one was that she could ride anything that had four legs and hair. Her death resulted not from a fall, but from a blow on the head which fractured her skull, and the blow came from the limb of an overhanging tree on the parking.

The last hour of her life was typical of its happiness. She came home from a day's work at school, topped off by a hard grind with the copy on the *High School Annual,* and felt that a ride would refresh her. She climbed into her khakis, chattering to her mother about the work she was doing, and hurried to get her horse and be out on the dirt roads for the country air and the radiant green fields of the spring. As she rode through the town on an easy gallop she kept waving at passers-by. She knew every one in town. For a decade the little figure with the long pigtail and the red hair ribbon has been familiar on the streets of Emporia, and she got in the way of speaking to those who

*From the Emporia *Gazette*, by permission of William Allen White.

nodded at her. She passed the Kerrs, walking the horse, in front of the Normal Library, and waved at them; passed another friend a few hundred feet farther on, and waved at her. The horse was walking and as she turned into North Merchant street she took off her cowboy hat, and the horse swung into a lope. She passed the Tripletts and waved her cowboy hat at them, still moving gaily north on Merchant street. A *Gazette* carrier passed—a High-School boy friend—and she waved at him, but with her bridle hand; the horse veered quickly, plunged into the parking where the low-hanging limb faced her, and, while she still looked back waving, the blow came. But she did not fall from the horse; she slipped off, dazed a bit, staggered and fell in a faint. She never quite recovered consciousness.

But she did not fall from the horse, neither was she riding fast. A year or so ago she used to go like the wind. But that habit was broken, and she used the horse to get into the open to get fresh, hard exercise, and to work off a certain surplus energy that welled up in her and needed a physical outlet. That need has been in her heart for years. It was back of the impulse that kept the dauntless, little brown-clad figure on the streets and country roads of this community and built into a strong, muscular body what had been a frail and sickly frame during the first years of her life. But the riding gave her more than a body. It released a gay and hardy soul. She was the happiest thing in the world. And she was happy because she was enlarging her horizon. She came to know all sorts and conditions of men; Charley O'Brien, the traffic cop, was one of her best friends. W. L. Holtz, the Latin teacher, was another. Tom O'Connor, farmer-politician, and Rev. J. H. J. Rice, preach-

er and police judge, and Frank Beach, music master, were her special friends, and all the girls, black and white, above the track and below the track, in Pepville and Stringtown, were among her acquaintances. And she brought home riotous stories of her adventures. She loved to rollick; persiflage was her natural expression at home. Her humor was a continual bubble of joy. She seemed to think in hyperbole and metaphor. She was mischievous without malice, as full of faults as an old shoe. No angel was Mary White, but an easy girl to live with, for she never nursed a grouch five minutes in her life.

With all her eagerness for the out-of-doors, she loved books. On her table when she left her room were a book by Conrad, one by Galsworthy, *Creative Chemistry* by E. E. Slosson, and a Kipling book. She read Mark Twain, Dickens, and Kipling before she was ten—all of their writings. Wells and Arnold Bennett particularly amused and diverted her. She was entered as a student in Wellesley in 1922; was assistant editor of the *High School Annual* this year, and in line for election to the editorship of *The Annual* next year. She was a member of the executive committee of the High-School Y. W. C. A.

Within the last two years she had begun to be moved by an ambition to draw. She began as most children do by scribbling in her schoolbooks, funny pictures. She bought cartoon magazines and took a course—rather casually, naturally, for she was, after all, a child, with no strong purposes—and this year she tasted the first fruits of success by having her pictures accepted by the *High School Annual.* But the thrill of delight she got when Mr. Ecord, of *The Normal Annual,* asked her to do the cartooning for that

book this spring, was too beautiful for words. She fell to her work with all her enthusiastic heart. Her drawings were accepted, and her pride—always repressed by a lively sense of the ridiculousness of the figure she was cutting—was a really gorgeous thing to see. No successful artist ever drank a deeper draught of satisfaction than she took from the little fame her work was getting among her schoolfellows. In her glory, she almost forgot her horse—but never her car.

For she used the car as a jitney bus. It was her social life. She never had a "party" in all her nearly seventeen years—wouldn't have one; but she never drove a block in the car in her life that she didn't begin to fill the car with pick-ups! Everybody rode with Mary White—white and black, old and young, rich and poor, men and women. She liked nothing better than to fill the car full of long-legged High-School boys and an occasional girl, and parade the town. She never had a "date," nor went to a dance, except once with her brother, Bill, and the "boy proposition" didn't interest her—yet. But young people—great, spring-breaking, varnish-cracking, fender-bending, door-sagging car-loads of "kids"—gave her great pleasure. Her zests were keen. But the most fun she ever had in her life was acting as chairman of the committee that got up the big turkey dinner for the poor folks at the county home; scores of pies, gallons of slaw; jam, cakes, preserves, oranges and a wilderness of turkey were loaded in the car and taken to the county home. And, being of a practical turn of mind, she risked her own Christmas dinner by staying to see that the poor folks actually got it all. Not that she was a cynic; she just disliked to tempt folks. While there she found a blind

colored uncle, very old, who could do nothing but make rag rugs, and she rustled up from her school friends rags enough to keep him busy for a season. The last engagement she tried to make was to take the guests at the county home out for a car ride. And the last endeavor of her life was to try to get a rest room for colored girls in the High School. She found one girl reading in the toilet, because there was no better place for a colored girl to loaf, and it inflamed her sense of injustice and she became a nagging harpy to those who she thought could remedy the evil. The poor she had always with her, and was glad of it. She hungered and thirsted for righteousness; and was the most impious creature in the world. She joined the Congregational Church without consulting her parents; not particularly for her soul's good. She never had a thrill of piety in her life, and would have hooted at a "testimony." But even as a little child she felt the church was an agency for helping people to more of life's abundance, and she wanted to help. She never wanted help for herself. Clothes meant little to her. It was a fight to get a new rig on her; but eventually a harder fight to get it off. She never wore a jewel and had no ring but her High-School class ring, and never asked for anything but a wrist watch. She refused to have her hair up; though she was nearly seventeen. "Mother," she protested, "you don't know how much I get by with, in my braided pigtails that I could not, with my hair up." Above every other passion of her life was her passion not to grow up, to be a child. The tom-boy in her, which was big, seemed to loath to be put away forever in skirts. She was a Peter Pan, who refused to grow up.

Her funeral yesterday at the Congregational Church was

as she would have wished it; no singing, no flowers save the big bunch of red roses from her brother Bill's Harvard classmen—Heavens, how proud that would have made her! and the red roses from *The Gazette* force—in vases at her head and feet. A short prayer, Paul's beautiful essay on "Love" from the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians, some remarks about her democratic spirit by her friend, John H. J. Rice, pastor and police judge, which she would have deprecated if she could, a prayer sent down for her by her friend, Carl Nau, and opening the service the slow, poignant movement from Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," which she loved, and closing the service a cutting from the joyously melancholy first movement of Tschaikowski's "Pathetic Symphony," which she liked to hear in certain moods on the phonograph; then the Lord's Prayer by her friends in the High School.

That was all.

For her pallbearers only her friends were chosen; her Latin teacher, W. L. Holtz; her High-School principal, Rice Brown; her doctor, Frank Foncannon; her friend, W. W. Finney; her pal at *The Gazette* office, Walter Hughes; and her brother Bill. It would have made her smile to know that her friend, Charley O'Brien, the traffic cop, had been transferred from Sixth and Commercial to the corner near the church to direct her friends who came to bid her goodby.

A rift in the clouds in a gray day threw a shaft of sunlight upon her coffin as her nervous, energetic little body sank to its last sleep. But the soul of her, the glowing, gorgeous, fervent soul of her, surely was flaming in eager joy upon some other dawn.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

In this essay Mary White lives for us who never saw her. It seems as if her radiant self stood before us; surely we know her almost as well as we know our friends.

What trait of her character is suggested by the statement that "she knew everybody in town"?

What did horseback riding do for her?

What were her interests in high school?

What use did she make of her car?

What does this show about her?

What other incidents show something about her character?

What do you imagine were the relations between her and her father?

What is the thought of the last sentence of the essay?

With what three subjects do Mr. White's writings chiefly deal?

In what ways is his career typically American?

Words worth learning: persiflage, hyperbole, cynic.

With this essay it is interesting to compare Emerson's "Threnody," a poem written after the death of his favorite son.

If you are interested in William Allen White, get one of his books of short stories, as mentioned in the sketch of his life, or read his *Masks in a Pageant,* pictures of men in public life.

Suggested Essay Subjects

The Character of a Friend.
An Incident that Showed Character.
What Makes a Person Popular?
"The way to have a friend is to be one."
Hobbies as a Part of Education.
School Honors.
"Mary White" Compared to Emerson's "Threnody."
William Allen White's Boy Stories.

A FRIEND IN THE DEAN'S OFFICE

ROLLO WALTER BROWN

ROLLO WALTER BROWN

Rollo Walter Brown, author, teacher, and lecturer, was born in Crooksville, Ohio, in 1880. He attended Ohio Northern University and Harvard. He taught English for a time at Wabash College, later at Carleton College and Harvard Summer School. He visited France to make a study of teaching in French schools corresponding to our high schools, and as a result published a book on *How the French Boy Learns to Write.* He also edited a book called *The Writer's Art, by Those Who Have Practised It.* Other books of his are *The Creative Spirit—An Inquiry Into American Life; Dean Briggs,* from which the essay here given is quoted, and *Lonely Americans,* studies in biography. Mr. Brown's home is in Cambridge, Mass. In a recent letter he says, "Saw the Dean the other day: he was looking fine."

A FRIEND IN THE DEAN'S OFFICE*

ROLLO WALTER BROWN

Of all the sprightly figures that adorn the college scene,
The most supremely genial is our own beloved Dean.
He'll kick you out of college, and he'll never shed a tear,
But he does it so politely that it's music to the ear.
He meets you in the anteroom, he grasps you by the hand,
He offers you the easy chair, and begs you not to stand.
"Good morning, Mr. Sporticus! How is your Uncle Jim?
I used to know him well at school—you look so much like him!
And you're enjoying college? Yes? Indeed! I am so glad!
Let's see—six E's? Impossible! How very, very sad!"

[In these rhymes a student described Dean Briggs of Harvard, who is the subject of the following essay.]

"My first encounter with him," confided a man long well known in the world of affairs and letters, "was at the very beginning of my freshman year, when I had the misfortune, on 'Bloody Monday' night, to lead a procession of victorious freshmen to Boston. On the way we appropriated some remarkably tempting red lanterns which were hanging on the barricade of a street under repair. Of course the police descended on us, hit some of us, including me, over the head with their night sticks, and removed us to the police station, whence we were duly bailed out by distracted parents. I was new at the ways of the world, and

*From *Dean Briggs*, by Rollo Walter Brown, copyrighted by Harper and Brother.

saw myself on the point of summary dismissal from Harvard before my career had really begun. The next evening, after I had duly appeared in police court and paid my fine of fifteen dollars for petty larceny, I went timorously up to Dean Briggs' house. I had read his book and thought he might be sympathetic. I told him the whole story, including a visual demonstration of the lump on my head produced by the policeman's billy—a lump still quite impressive—and I shall never forget the gently amused way in which he told me that he did not believe my crime was one which would involve my being separated from the university, and that the feeling of my head ought to be sufficient warning not to try conclusions with the police again. Having dismissed that matter, he invited me to come in and have a cup of chocolate. My affection for him dated from that minute; he certainly straightened out what might have been a rather inauspicious beginning to my college career."

He knew all of the ways of saying no, and the most casual of them were magical in their effectiveness. Another of his old boys tells this story: "I was once called to his office—to explain why I had been cutting Philosophy. In an attempt at justification, I stated that I had made an A in my mid-year exam in the course; that I was sure I could pull a B in the final without going to class very much; that my legs were long and were badly cramped by sitting in the close seats of Sever 11; and that the ventilation was not all that could be desired. His face lighted up with interest in my powers of improvisation. 'Well,' he remarked, quite casually, 'I don't believe I'd cut quite so often.' And I didn't. As a matter of fact, I didn't cut again that year."

For every sort of man he was a cheerful, hopeful friend;

but the under dog, the man to whom being down and out was a grave possibility, seemed to be the object of his most ardent, most affectionate concern. If all the records of his encouragement to struggling college men could be brought together, they would make such a volume as has never been written.

So acute were his powers of observation that students used to declare he could recognize a hungry man clear across the College Yard. Somehow all the men who were working their way through college seemed to be known to him, and he constantly kept an eye out for their comfort. If he suspected that a man was on the point of dropping out because of insufficient food or clothing, he would find an excuse for meeting him somewhere, and he would invariably close the conversation with, "Now promise me you won't go without first coming to see me." In some mysterious fashion he was always making it unnecessary for men to go at all. A man who had the misfortune to be lame in both legs and could not, therefore, do the manual labor to which many students resorted, has told, from his own experience, of the Dean's success in knowing who was in need:

"Only once during the four years had the outlook seemed hopeless. That was in the spring of the senior year. The city in which I had been teaching night school ran temporarily out of funds and I could not collect my salary. I had purchased a supply of paper for a printing job which failed me, and a late spring kept snow on the ground so that car-fares ate up my earnings as fast as I received them. One morning, as I went to classes, I spent my last cent on car-fare. I wore two rubbers for the left foot, and the world looked gloomy indeed. To make matters worse, the mail man

passed me a note from the Dean asking me to call at his office at noon, and I wondered what new troubles were about to descend.

"At the dreaded hour I knocked at his door, and told him my errand. He stepped into the hall and in a stammering way said: 'I hardly know how to begin. Some years ago a man in the Law School died, and for several years his sister used to send me five dollars to give to some student who could not go home for Christmas Day. Recently, one of the men to whom I gave the five dollars returned, and gave me back the five dollars doubled. Now I wonder if you would feel hurt if I should ask you to accept the ten dollars which he just gave me?' To my dying day I shall always wonder how Dean Briggs knew of my financial condition, for, as far as I can recall, this was the only time he spoke to me during my four years in college."

He was always tramping about, seeing to it that somebody was well clothed or well fed, or provided with other necessary comforts. How he found time for his countless errands of this sort, no efficiency expert could calculate. But in the white days of winter, when he was not to be found in his office or at home, he could usually be found trudging along some street in Cambridge, often with a box of cut flowers hanging loosely under one arm, and the snowflakes piling themselves into the gaping collar of his brown great-coat.

A family of distinguished brothers who worked their way through Harvard had one especially bad winter when neither work nor heat was plentiful. They were occupying a room in an unrented house which the real-estate dealer was glad to have them live in, since he could in this way keep his fire insurance in force. The weather was so cold

that the water had to be turned off, and the brothers carried water from a neighboring house. Their plight could not be called exactly cheerful, but in their financial condition, any kind of room was good enough. "So on we lived, gaily if not too comfortably. . . . During the bitter winter weather one of us fell ill with measles. Thereupon Dean Briggs called to see that the sick boy was well cared for. No one answered the ring until the sick boy crept downstairs to the door. The Dean was immensely impressed, but remarked rather apologetically that he was sorry a college rule strictly forbade students to live thus in a house alone. His chief concern, however, was whether we were really comfortable. Upon our assuring him that we were wholly all right, he seemed satisfied. He called occasionally, always first asking about our health and comfort, apparently not in the least concerned that a rigid rule of the college was being broken. He might well have insisted that we live up to the rule; but he knew that we were too busy to take advantage of our isolation by 'rough-housing' or otherwise getting into mischief. Of President Eliot I saw very little; his theories about education were somewhat nebulous and unreal, like theories about the stars. But about Dean Briggs there could be no doubt. He was human; he was intimate, personal, vastly gentle and kind. To me and to my brothers he meant Harvard, and Harvard meant nothing else than Dean Briggs."

In arriving at that profound intimacy and clairvoyant sensitiveness which enabled him to help a man out of his own peculiar morass, he was aided greatly by a practice which he had established almost as soon as he had begun his teaching; namely, that of keeping one evening a week open

so that students might come to his house and spend an hour or two with him and Mrs. Briggs.

So every Tuesday evening they went to the rambling yellow house at 146 Brattle Street and were received into the heart of a home. Sometimes the men were a little embarrassed at the sight of one another; they each wished, perhaps, that the others had not come—so pleasant would it be just to sit there alone with Mr. and Mrs. Briggs. But the Dean soon broke down any barriers by turning to a clearly objective life. He discoursed on the intelligence of Fritz, the great St. Bernard who walked agreeably about and poked his nose into the knees or folded arms of the visitors until they acknowledged his presence. Or he demonstrated how Joshua, the spotted cat—or possibly Robert Browning, Joshua's predecessor in favor—could jump through his arms or could distinguish certain words when spoken by the right member of the family. Or he talked of some of his neighbors in the Plymouth country—how they were still unspoiled by telephones and automobiles. Or he laughed over the freshman who had written that "Dante stood with one foot in the Middle Ages and with the other waved a greeting to the rising sun of modern literature," or over the guide in the Harvard Yard who had said in response to a question by one of the fifty tourists who swarmed admiringly about him, "Oh, the women students are all over at Radcliffe; Harvard itself is strictly non-sectarian!" or over something else that called for no strained sophistication on the part of those who listened. And then he asked the maid to bring in some chocolate and cookies—on one historic occasion, cream puffs—and he demonstrated how they could be enjoyed without unnecessary restriction. In the course of

a very few minutes these men ceased to be "correctly shaved, combed, and buttoned automatons" and became cheerful fellow-beings who talked without fear, who felt no desire to demonstrate their sophistication, who seemed a thousand miles away from an academic community. It is vastly important and real and comfortable to be sitting with a man who tells stories and enjoys them, and who is so unaffected that he "goes leaning his way about the entire room" while he talks. And how heartening to talk to a pleasant, motherly woman who knits or crochets in the glow of the great lamp on the table while she listens and understands! One may speak intimately about one's father and mother, and one's home town—how agreeably large it looms! One may express one's hopes for the future without having them all scoffed at by some adult who has suffered arrested growth.

The men glow with a surprising readiness of thought and speech. They are in no hurry to go. But finally, when they do go, they depart in groups—sometimes in one intent group—and they continue the conversation on the way. They discuss the Dean too; how he had carried off some overworked instructor to his house on the Cape; how he had done this for some poor scapegoat, and said that to some senior who was slipping.

Within a decade, then, see how this man became so large a part of the institution in which he worked. Daily he is up early. Early he swings along Brattle Street, his green book-bag over his shoulder, his hat pushed just the least bit back from his forehead, the light of the morning full in his face —"the most unworldly face," according to one of his neighbors who saw him starting off to his work every morning,

"that one may ever hope to see." He is down at the yard early enough to have done no inconsiderable part of a day's work, and to have attended morning prayers in Appleton Chapel, when the students begin to come in at nine o'clock or nine-thirty. All forenoon they pour into the corridor—loafers, flunkers, discouraged self-supporting country boys, fathers, mothers, homesick freshmen who have hatched up some reason for seeing the Dean just to be near him for a few minutes—all these pour in and wait their turn to be admitted to his office; fellow-officers of the college wedge themselves through the waiting throng of students for a word about some difficult matter of administration; the telephone is insistent that some one at a distance be heard; he promises to attend without fail an important meeting of some board of school trustees of which he is a member; he accepts an invitation to speak at some school or college within a month; he listens with great interest to a graduate who has slipped in to report that in spite of his mediocre college record he is now not doing so badly. With all of the extras, the morning is too full; the conferences stretch on into the hour customarily set aside for lunch. Sometimes the Dean is able to steal away for what he calls a perpendicular lunch—in his later years, at Jimmie's on Holyoke Street; sometimes the procession in front of his office door is so long that men are still waiting to see him when those with afternoon appointments begin to arrive, and he gets no lunch at all. On some days, too, there are class lectures to squeeze into his programme; and there are always themes to grade, commencement parts to read and criticise, and reports to work on. And there are committee meetings, and faculty meetings, and meetings of the De-

partment of English. Occasionally when he has gone through a day of this kind, and is ready to hurry away to his house for dinner, somebody brings him the disconcerting news that a freshman has disappeared from the university, or that a sophomore has been drowned in the river, or that some pampered hanger-on is locked up in jail and his parents are demanding why the college let him get there. Yet through the steady pressure of such a day he never lets any one feel that a matter is being hurried; the hurrying is "between times." "The greatest evil in the whole business," he once remarked to a former student who was interested in college administration, "is doing things in a hurry. The student who comes to you with a problem which seems to him as grave as death is certain to feel, if you deal with him impatiently, that he is unimportant and that justice is unimportant." So within the confines of the office, every man was at ease in the thought that his case was the most important in the world. And until it was satisfactorily worked out, it was.

With all of these hours in his office, there yet remained those others which he spent in visiting the sick, in looking after some colored family whose mother had once been a servant in the Briggs's house, in hearing the petitions of good Cambridge ladies who believed they knew of important matters which ought to have his attention, in tramping about looking for some stray student, and in general saving the world as much pain as possible. A neighbor on his way home from a midnight train which had arrived in Boston an hour or two late, found the Dean tramping about Harvard Square looking for a thoughtless senior who had not paid his college bills and whose family, then

on the way to Cambridge to see him graduate, would be humiliated by seeing him go without his degree unless he paid the bill before nine o'clock the next morning!

Could one be much startled at signs of overstrain in the Dean after a decade of such vigilance? He was cheerful, still, but weary. President Eliot one day came to him and said, "I have heard that you went to sleep the other day standing up." It might have been true; he dropped off to sleep whenever he sat down in seclusion, and sometimes when he talked with a friend. He could no longer continue the killing pace; the breaking-point was too near. So it was decided in the spring of 1902 that he should succeed Professor Clement L. Smith as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The undergraduates heard of the proposed change with something of the amazement they would have experienced had Dean Briggs suddenly been translated to some other world. They were assured that he would still be connected with the university—even, to a certain extent, with the college—and that he was receiving a distinct promotion in rank. But they were not concerned with his promotion—at least not just then. The matter of importance was that they were losing their Dean. Anybody ought to understand that!

But they made the quick recovery characteristic of youth. If he had to go, they would speed him on his way. And they would let him know—as though he had never known before—just how much they thought of him. Accordingly, one evening in May, after they had arranged with Mrs. Briggs and one of the Dean's colleagues to have him come to his office on some specious errand, they assembled east

of Sever Hall, fifteen hundred of them, and marched to the steps of the "University." They lighted up the Yard with red fire; they cheered until their Dean looked shrinkingly from the window of his office; one of their own number, a member of the senior class, made a brief, fitting speech; then they cheered on and on and called for Dean Briggs until he revealed himself a little more fully. He was deeply moved by this spontaneous, genuine assurance of affection; so deeply moved, in truth, that he found it difficult to speak. "I thank you for your kindness," he is reported to have said, "and I can only say that I am not afraid of the students of Harvard College in Mr. Hurlbut's hands. They will be looked after well. I hope when I give up my present work I shall see as much of the students as I did before. I think you can get along without me" (cries of No! No! No!), "but I know that I cannot get along without you."

There was tremendous and prolonged applause, and then the regretful breaking up of this great crowd of young men who perhaps did not see very completely just what Dean Briggs had contributed to their college, yet who knew that it was something which satisfied an essential need of their adventurous spirits.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

The dean of a college has as one of his duties to look after cases of discipline. This is often an unpleasant business. Le Baron Russell Briggs, who for thirty years was dean at Harvard, so performed his duties, official and unofficial, that he was known as the best-loved dean in America. He retired from active service in 1925, and shortly afterward one of his former students, Rollo W. Brown, published a biography called *Dean*

Briggs. The essay here given is abridged from a chapter in that book.

What traits of character did Dean Briggs show in the way he handled the student who had spent the night in a police station?

What was shown by the way he helped the lame student?

What made him keep open house for the students every week?

What inferences about him can be drawn from the sketch of his daily round? (Page 61.)

What was shown by the action of the students when they heard he was to be dean no longer?

It is said that a teacher's life is hard and ill paid. Comment upon this, in the light of this character sketch.

Words worth learning: clairvoyant, specious, sophistication.

Dean Briggs has put his observations of students into a book entitled *School, College and Character.* A senior who expects to go to college can find no book better worth reading.

MY FIRST BOOK

JOSEPH CONRAD

JOSEPH CONRAD

Joseph Conrad (1856–1924) is a strange figure in literary history. Born in Poland (his real name was Karzeniowski), with not a drop of English blood in his veins, he never heard the English language until he was a grown man, yet he became one of the great English novelists. His father, a native of Poland and a man of culture, was exiled to Russia for political reasons. When young Conrad was seventeen, just ready to enter the university, he ran away from home and shipped as a common sailor. He followed the sea for more than twenty years, most of the time on British vessels, and had attained the rank of captain when a severe attack of tropical fever compelled him to give up his occupation. He had read widely, in French and Polish as well as in English, and even before he left the sea he had tried to write. Idle in a London boarding house, as he tells us in this essay, he took up the partly written story which was to become *Almayer's Folly*. When it was published it found but few readers. John Galsworthy, the English novelist and dramatist, encouraged Conrad to go on. He wrote a dozen novels without becoming in any degree popular, but the publication of *Chance* (1914) made him widely known. In this essay he speaks of having written fourteen volumes; the full count of his books is twenty-seven, of which three are essays: *A Personal Record, Notes on Life and Letters,* and *Five Prefaces.* Among his best novels are *The Nigger of the Narcissus, Lord Jim, Youth, Typhoon, Chance,* and *Victory.*

MY FIRST BOOK*

JOSEPH CONRAD

THAT morning I got up from my breakfast, pushing the chair back, and rang the bell violently, or perhaps I should say resolutely, or perhaps I should say eagerly, I do not know. But manifestly it must have been a special ring of the bell, a common sound made impressive, like the ringing of a bell for the raising of the curtain upon a new scene. It was an unusual thing for me to do. Generally, I dawdled over my breakfast and I seldom took the trouble to ring the bell for the table to be cleared away; but on that morning for some reason hidden in the general mysteriousness of the event I did not dawdle. And yet I was not in a hurry. I pulled the cord casually, and while the faint tinkling somewhere down in the basement went on, I charged my pipe in the usual way and I looked for the matchbox with glances distraught indeed but exhibiting, I am ready to swear, no signs of a fine frenzy. I was composed enough to perceive after some considerable time the matchbox lying there on the mantelpiece right under my nose. And all this was beautifully and safely usual. Before I had thrown down the match my landlady's daughter appeared with her calm, pale face and an inquisitive look, in the doorway. Of late it was the landlady's daughter who answered my bell. I mention this little fact with pride, because it proves that during the thirty or forty days of my tenancy I had produced a favorable impression. For a fortnight past I had

*From *A Personal Record*, by Joseph Conrad, copyrighted by Doubleday, Doran and Company.

been spared the unattractive sight of the domestic slave. The girls in that Bessborough Gardens house were often changed, but whether short or long, fair or dark, they were always untidy and particularly bedraggled, as if in a sordid version of the fairy tale the ashbin cat had been changed into a maid. I was infinitely sensible of the privilege of being waited on by my landlady's daughter. She was neat if anæmic.

"Will you please clear away all this at once?" I addressed her in convulsive accents, being at the same time engaged in getting my pipe to draw. This, I admit, was an unusual request. Generally on getting up from breakfast I would sit down in the window with a book and let them clear the table when they liked; but if you think that on that morning I was in the least impatient, you are mistaken. I remember that I was perfectly calm. As a matter of fact I was not at all certain that I wanted to write, or that I meant to write, or that I had anything to write about. No, I was not impatient. I lounged between the mantelpiece and the window, not even consciously waiting for the table to be cleared. It was ten to one that before my landlady's daughter was done I would pick up a book and sit down with it all the morning in a spirit of enjoyable indolence. I affirm it with assurance, and I don't even know now what were the books then lying about the room. Whatever they were they were not the works of great masters, where the secret of clear thought and exact expression can be found. Since the age of five I have been a great reader, as is not perhaps wonderful in a child who was never aware of learning to read. At ten years of age I had read much of Victor Hugo and other romantics. I had read in Polish and in French,

history, voyages, novels; I knew *Gil Blas* and *Don Quixote* in abridged editions; I had read in early boyhood Polish poets and some French poets, but I cannot say what I read on the evening before I began to write myself. I believe it was a novel, and it is quite possible that it was one of Anthony Trollope's novels. It is very likely. My acquaintance with him was then very recent. He is one of the English novelists whose works I read for the first time in English. With men of European reputation, with Dickens and Walter Scott and Thackeray, it was otherwise. My first introduction to English imaginative literature was *Nicholas Nickleby*. It is extraordinary how well Mrs. Nickleby could chatter disconnectedly in Polish and the sinister Ralph rage in that language. As to the Crummles family and the family of the learned Squeers, it seemed as natural to them as their native speech. It was, I have no doubt, an excellent translation. This must have been in the year '70. But I really believe that I am wrong. That book was not my first introduction to English literature. My first acquaintance was (or were) the *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* and that in the very MS. of my father's translation. It was during our exile in Russia, and it must have been less than a year after my mother's death, because I remember myself in the black blouse with a white border of my heavy mourning. We were living together, quite alone, in a small house on the outskirts of the town of T——. That afternoon, instead of going out to play in the large yard which we shared with our landlord, I had lingered in the room in which my father generally wrote. What emboldened me to clamber into his chair I am sure I don't know, but a couple of hours afterward he discovered me kneeling in it with my elbows

on the table and my head held in both hands over the MS. of loose pages. I was greatly confused, expecting to get into trouble. He stood in the doorway looking at me with some surprise, but the only thing he said after a moment of silence was:

"Read the page aloud."

Luckily the page lying before me was not over blotted with erasures and corrections, and my father's handwriting was otherwise extremely legible. When I got to the end he nodded and I flew out of doors thinking myself lucky to have escaped reproof for that piece of impulsive audacity. I have tried to discover since the reason of this mildness, and I imagine that all unknown to myself I had earned, in my father's mind, the right to some latitude in my relations with his writing-table. It was only a month before, or perhaps it was only a week before that I had read to him aloud from beginning to end, and to his perfect satisfaction, as he lay on his bed, not being very well at the time, the proofs of his translation of Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*. Such was my title to consideration, I believe, and also my first introduction to the sea in literature. If I do not remember where, how and when I learned to read, I am not likely to forget the process of being trained in the art of reading aloud. My poor father, an admirable reader himself, was the most exacting of masters. I reflect proudly that I must have read that page of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* tolerably well at the age of eight. The next time I met them was in a five-shilling one-volume edition of the dramatic works of William Shakespeare, read in Falmouth, at odd moments of the day, to the noisy accompaniment of caulkers' mallets driving oakum into the deck-seams of a ship in

dry dock. We had run in, in a sinking condition and with the crew refusing duty after a month of weary battling with the gales of the North Atlantic. Books are an integral part of one's life and my Shakespearean associations are with that first year of our bereavement, the last I spent with my father in exile (he sent me away to Poland to my mother's brother directly he could brace himself up for the separation), and with the year of hard gales, the year in which I came nearest to death at sea, first by water and then by fire.

Those things I remember, but what I was reading the day before my writing life began I have forgotten. I have only a vague notion that it might have been one of Trollope's political novels. And I remember, too, the character of the day. It was an autumn day with an opaline atmosphere, a veiled, semi-opaque, lustrous day, with fiery points and flashes of red sunlight on the roofs and windows opposite, while the trees of the square with all their leaves gone were like tracings of indian ink on a sheet of tissue paper. It was one of those London days that have the charm of mysterious amenity, of fascinating softness. The effect of opaline mist was often repeated at Bessborough Gardens on account of the nearness to the river.

There is no reason why I should remember that effect more on that day than on any other day, except that I stood for a long time looking out of the window after the landlady's daughter was gone with her spoil of cups and saucers. I heard her put the tray down in the passage and finally shut the door; and still I remained smoking with my back to the room. It is very clear that I was in no haste to take the plunge into my writing life. If as plunge this first at-

tempt may be described. My whole being was steeped deep in the indolence of a sailor away from the sea, the scene of never-ending labor and of unceasing duty. For utter surrender to indolence you cannot beat a sailor ashore when that mood is on him, the mood of absolute irresponsibility tasted to the full. It seems to me that I thought of nothing whatever, but this is an impression which is hardly to be believed at this distance of years. What I am certain of is, that I was very far from thinking of writing a story, though it is possible and even likely that I was thinking of the man Almayer.

I had seen him for the first time some four years before from the bridge of a steamer moored to a rickety little wharf forty miles up, more or less, a Bornean river. It was very early morning, and a slight mist, an opaline mist as in Bessborough Gardens only without the fiery flicks on roof and chimney-pot from the rays of the red London sun, promised to turn presently into a woolly fog. Barring a small dugout canoe on the river, there was nothing moving within sight. I had just come up yawning from my cabin. The serang* and the Malay crew were overhauling the cargo chains and trying the winches; their voices sounded subdued on the deck below and their movements were languid. That tropical daybreak was chilly. The Malay quartermaster, coming up to get something from the lockers on the bridge, shivered visibly. The forests above and below and on the opposite bank looked black and dank; wet dripped from the rigging upon the tightly stretched deck awnings, and it was in the middle of a shuddering yawn that I caught sight of Almayer. He was

*Serang, the master of the crew.

moving across a patch of burnt grass, a blurred, shadowy shape with the blurred bulk of a house behind him, a low house of mats, bamboos and palm-leaves with a high-pitched roof of grass.

He stepped upon the jetty. He was clad simply in flapping pyjamas of cretonne pattern (enormous flowers with yellow petals on a disagreeable blue ground) and a thin cotton singlet* with short sleeves. His arms, bare to the elbow, were crossed on his chest. His black hair looked as if it had not been cut for a very long time and a curly wisp of it strayed across his forehead. I had heard of him at Singapore; I had heard of him on board; I had heard of him early in the morning and late at night; I had heard of him at tiffin† and at dinner; I had heard of him in a place called Pulo Laut from a half-caste gentleman there, who described himself as the manager of a coal-mine; which sounded civilized and progressive till you heard that the mine could not be worked at present because it was haunted by some particularly atrocious ghosts. I had heard of him in a place called Dongola, in the Island of Celebes, when the Rajah of that little-known sea-port (you can get no anchorage there in less than fifteen fathom, which is extremely inconvenient) came on board in a friendly way with only two attendants, and drank bottle after bottle of soda-water on the after-skylight with my good friend and commander Captain C——. At least I heard his name distinctly pronounced several times in a lot of talk in Malay language. Oh, yes, I heard it quite distinctly—Almayer, Almayer—and saw Captain C—— smile while the fat, dingy Rajah laughed audibly. To hear a Malay Rajah laugh outright is

*Singlet, an undershirt. †Tiffin, luncheon.

a rare experience, I can assure you. And I overheard more of Almayer's name amongst our deck passengers (mostly wandering traders of good repute) as they sat all over the ship—each man fenced round with bundles and boxes—on mats, on pillows, on quilts, on billets of wood, conversing of Island affairs. Upon my word, I heard the mutter of Almayer's name faintly at midnight, while making my way aft from the bridge to look at the patent taffrail-log tinkling its quarter-miles in the great silence of the sea. I don't mean to say that our passengers dreamed aloud of Almayer, but it is indubitable that two of them at least, who could not sleep apparently and were trying to charm away the trouble of insomnia by a little whispered talk at that ghostly hour were referring in some way or other to Almayer. It was really impossible on board that ship to get away definitely from Almayer; and a very small pony tied up forward and whisking its tail inside the galley, to the great embarrassment of our Chinaman cook, was destined for Almayer. What he wanted with a pony goodness only knows, since I am perfectly certain he could not ride it; but here you have the man, ambitious, aiming at the grandiose, importing a pony, whereas in the whole settlement at which he used to shake daily his impotent fist, there was only one path that was practicable for a pony: a quarter of a mile at most, hedged in by hundreds of square leagues of virgin forest. But who knows? The importation of that Bali pony might have been part of some deep scheme, of some diplomatic plan, of some hopeful intrigue. With Almayer one could never tell. He governed his conduct by considerations removed from the obvious, by incredible assumptions, which rendered his logic impenetrable to any reasonable person.

I learned all this later. That morning, seeing the figure in pyjamas moving in the mist, I said to myself: "That's the man."

He came quite close to the ship's side and raised a harassed countenance, round and flat, with that curl of black hair over the forehead and a heavy, pained glance.

"Good morning."

"Good morning."

He looked hard at me: I was a new face, having just replaced the chief mate he was accustomed to see; and I think that this novelty inspired him, as things generally did, with deep-seated mistrust.

"Didn't expect you in till this evening," he remarked suspiciously.

I don't know why he should have been aggrieved, but he seemed to be. I took pains to explain to him that having picked up the beacon at the mouth of the river just before dark and the tide serving, Captain C—— was enabled to cross the bar and there was nothing to prevent him going up the river at night.

"Captain C—— knows this river like his own pocket," I concluded discursively, trying to get on terms.

"Better," said Almayer.

Leaning over the rail of the bridge I looked at Almayer, who looked down at the wharf in aggrieved thought. He shuffled his feet a little; he wore straw slippers with thick soles. The morning fog had thickened considerably. Everything round us dripped: the derricks, the rails, every single rope in the ship—as if a fit of crying had come upon the universe.

Almayer again raised his head and, in the accents of a

man accustomed to the buffets of evil fortune, asked hardly audibly: "I suppose you haven't got such a thing as a pony on board?"

I told him almost in a whisper, for he attuned my communications to his minor key, that we had such a thing as a pony, and I hinted, as gently as I could, that he was confoundedly in the way too. I was very anxious to have him landed before I began to handle the cargo. Almayer remained looking up at me for a long while with incredulous and melancholy eyes as though it were not a safe thing to believe my statement. This pathetic mistrust in the favorable issue of any sort of affair touched me deeply, and I added:

"He doesn't seem a bit the worse for the passage. He's a nice pony, too."

Almayer was not to be cheered up; for all answer he cleared his throat and looked down again at his feet. I tried to close with him on another track.

"By Jove!" I said. "Aren't you afraid of catching pneumonia or bronchitis or something, walking about in a singlet in such a wet fog?"

He was not to be propitiated by a show of interest in his health. His answer was a sinster "No fear," as much as to say that even that way of escape from inclement fortune was closed to him.

"I just came down . . ." he mumbled after a while.

"Well, then, now you're here I will land that pony for you at once and you can lead him home. I really don't want him on deck. He's in the way."

Almayer seemed doubtful. I insisted:

"Why, I will just swing him out and land him on the

wharf right in front of you. I'd much rather do it before the hatches are off. The little devil may jump down the hold or do some other deadly thing."

"There's a halter?" postulated Almayer.

"Yes, of course there's a halter." And without waiting any more I leaned over the bridge rail.

"Serang, land Tuan* Almayer's pony."

The cook hastened to shut the door of the galley and a moment later a great scuffle began on deck. The pony kicked with extreme energy, the kalashes† skipped out of the way, the serang issued many orders in a cracked voice. Suddenly the pony leaped upon the fore-hatch. His little hoofs thundered tremendously; he plunged and reared. He had tossed his mane and his forelock into a state of amazing wildness, he dilated his nostrils, bits of foam flecked his broad little chest, his eyes blazed. He was something under eleven hands, he was fierce, terrible, angry, warlike, he said ha! ha! distinctly, he raged and thumped—and sixteen able-bodied kalashes stood round him like disconcerted nurses round a spoilt and passionate child. He whisked his tail incessantly; he arched his pretty neck; he was perfectly delightful; he was charmingly naughty. There was not an atom of vice in that performance; no savage baring of teeth and laying back of ears. On the contrary, he pricked them forward in a comically aggressive manner. He was totally unmoral and lovable; I would have liked to give him bread, sugar, carrots. But life is a stern thing and the sense of duty the only safe guide. So I steeled my heart and from my elevated position on the bridge I ordered the men to fling themselves upon him in a body.

*Tuan, lord, master; a title of respect. †Kalash, deck hand.

The elderly serang, emitting a strange inarticulate cry, gave the example. He was an excellent petty officer—very competent indeed, and a moderate opium smoker. The rest of them in one great rush smothered that pony. They hung on to his ears, to his mane, to his tail; they lay in piles across his back, seventeen in all. The carpenter, seizing the hook of the cargo-chain, flung himself on the top of them. A very satisfactory petty officer too, but he stuttered. Have you ever heard a light-yellow, lean, sad, earnest Chinaman stutter in pidgin-English? It's very weird indeed. He made the eighteenth. I could not see the pony at all; but from the swaying and heaving of that heap of men I knew that there was something alive inside.

From the wharf Almayer hailed in quavering tones:

Oh, I say!"

Where he stood he could not see what was going on on deck unless perhaps the tops of the men's heads; he could only hear the scuffle, the mighty thuds as if the ship were being knocked to pieces. I looked over: "What is it?"

"Don't let them break his legs," he entreated me plaintively.

"Oh, nonsense! He's all right now. He can't move."

By that time the cargo-chain had been hooked to the broad canvas belt round the pony's body, the kalashes sprang off simultaneously in all directions, rolling over each other, and the worthy serang, making a dash behind the winch, turned the steam on.

"Steady!" I yelled, in great apprehension of seeing the animal snatched up to the very head of the derrick.

On the wharf Almayer shuffled his straw slippers uneasily. The rattle of the winch stopped, and in a tense, im-

pressive silence that pony began to swing across the deck.

How limp he was! Directly he felt himself in the air he relaxed every muscle in a most wonderful manner. His four hoofs knocked together in a bunch, his head hung down, and his tail remained pendent in a nerveless and absolute immobility. He reminded me vividly of the pathetic little sheep which hangs on the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece. I had no idea that anything in the shape of a horse could be so limp as that, either living or dead. His wild mane hung down lumpily, a mere mass of inanimate horsehair; his aggressive ears had collapsed, but as he went swaying slowly across the front of the bridge I noticed an astute gleam in his dreamy, half-closed eye. A trustworthy quartermaster, his glance anxious and his mouth on the broad grin, was easing over the derrick watchfully. I superintended, greatly interested.

"So! That will do."

The derrick-head stopped. The kalashes lined the rail. The rope of the halter hung perpendicular and motionless like a bell-pull in front of Almayer. Everything was very still. I suggested amicably that he should catch hold of the rope and mind what he was about. He extended a provokingly casual and superior hand.

"Look out, then! Lower away!"

Almayer gathered in the rope intelligently enough, but when the pony's hoofs touched the wharf he gave way all at once to a most foolish optimism. Without pausing, without thinking, almost without looking, he disengaged the hook suddenly from the sling, and the cargo-chain, after hitting the pony's quarters, swung back against the ship's side with a noisy, rattling slap. I suppose I must have

blinked. I know I missed something, because the next thing I saw was Almayer lying flat on his back on the jetty. He was alone.

Astonishment deprived me of speech long enough to give Almayer time to pick himself up in a leisurely and painful manner. The kalashes lining the rail all had their mouths open. The mist flew in the light breeze, and it had come over quite thick enough to hide the shore completely.

"How on earth did you manage to let him get away?" I asked scandalized.

Almayer looked into the smarting palm of his right hand, but did not answer my inquiry.

"Where do you think he will get to?" I cried. "Are there any fences anywhere in this fog? Can he bolt into the forest? What's to be done now?"

Almayer shrugged his shoulders.

"Some of my men are sure to be about. They will get hold of him sooner or later."

"Sooner or later! That's all very fine, but what about my canvas sling?—he's carried it off. I want it now, at once, to land two Celebes cows."

Since Dongola we had on board a pair of the pretty little island cattle in addition to the pony. Tied up on the other side of the fore deck they had been whisking their tails into the other door of the galley. These cows were not for Almayer, however, they were invoiced to Abdullah bin Selim, his enemy. Almayer's disregard of my requirements was complete.

"If I were you I would try to find out where he's gone," I insisted. "Hadn't you better call your men together or

something? He will throw himself down and cut his knees. He may even break a leg, you know."

But Almayer, plunged in abstracted thought, did not seem to want that pony any more. Amazed at this sudden indifference, I turned all hands out on shore to hunt for him on my own account, or, at any rate, to hunt for the canvas sling which he had round his body. The whole crew of the steamer, with the exception of firemen and engineers, rushed up the jetty past the thoughtful Almayer and vanished from my sight. The white fog swallowed them up; and again there was a deep silence that seemed to extend for miles up and down the stream. Still taciturn, Almayer started to climb on board, and I went down from the bridge to meet him on the after deck.

"Would you mind telling the captain that I want to see him very particularly?" he asked me in a low tone, letting his eyes stray all over the place.

"Very well. I will go and see."

With the door of his cabin wide open Captain C——, just back from the bathroom, big and broad-chested, was brushing his thick, damp, iron-gray hair with two large brushes.

"Mr. Almayer told me he wanted to see you very particularly, sir."

Saying these words I smiled. I don't know why I smiled except that it seemed absolutely impossible to mention Almayer's name without a smile of a sort. It had not to be necessarily a mirthful smile. Turning his head toward me Captain C—— smiled too, rather joylessly.

"The pony got away from him—eh?"

"Yes, sir. He did."

"Where is he?"

"Goodness only knows."

"No. I mean Almayer. Let him come along."

The captain's state-room opening straight on deck under the bridge, I had only to beckon from the doorway to Almayer, who had remained aft, with downcast eyes, on the very spot where I had left him. He strolled up moodily, shook hands, and at once asked permission to shut the cabin door.

"I have a pretty story to tell you," were the last words I heard. The bitterness of tone was remarkable.

I went away from the door, of course. For the moment I had no crew on board; only the Chinaman carpenter, with a canvas bag hung round his neck and a hammer in his hand, roamed about the empty decks knocking out the wedges of the hatches and dropping them into the bag conscientiously. Having nothing to do, I joined our two engineers at the door of the engine-room. It was near breakfast-time.

"He's turned up early, hasn't he?" commented the second engineer, and smiled indifferently. He was an abstemious man with a good digestion and a placid, reasonable view of life even when hungry.

"Yes," I said. "Shut up with the old man. Some very particular business."

"He will spin him a damned endless yarn," observed the chief engineer.

He smiled rather sourly. He was dyspeptic and suffered from gnawing hunger in the morning. The second smiled broadly, a smile that made two vertical folds on his shaven cheeks. And I smiled too, but I was not exactly amused.

In that man, whose name apparently could not be uttered anywhere in the Malay Archipelago without a smile, there was nothing amusing whatever. That morning he breakfasted with us silently, looking mostly into his cup. I informed him that my men came upon his pony capering in the fog on the very brink of the eight-foot-deep well in which he kept his store of guttah.* The cover was off, with no one near by, and the whole of my crew just missed going heels over head into that beastly hole. Jurumudi Itam, our best quartermaster, deft at fine needlework, he who mended the ship's flags and sewed buttons on our coats, was disabled by a kick on the shoulder.

Both remorse and gratitude seemed foreign to Almayer's character. He mumbled:

"Do you mean that pirate fellow?"

"What pirate fellow? The man has been in the ship eleven years," I said indignantly.

"It's his looks," Almayer muttered for all apology.

The sun had eaten up the fog. From where we sat under the after awning we could see in the distance the pony tied up in front of Almayer's house, to a post of the verandah. We were silent for a long time. All at once Almayer, alluding evidently to the subject of his conversation in the captain's cabin, exclaimed anxiously across the table:

"I really don't know what I can do now!"

Captain C—— only raised his eyebrows at him, and got up from his chair. We dispersed to our duties, but Almayer, half-dressed as he was in his cretonne pyjamas and the thin cotton singlet, remained on board, lingering near the gangway as though he could not make up his mind whether to

*Guttah, the dried sap of a tree from which rubber is made.

go home or stay with us for good. Our Chinamen boys gave him side glances as they went to and fro; and Ah Sing, our young chief steward, the handsomest and most sympathetic of Chinamen, catching my eye, nodded knowingly at his burly back. In the course of the morning I approached him for a moment.

"Well, Mr. Almayer," I addressed him easily, "you haven't started on your letters yet."

We had brought him his mail and he had held the bundle in his hand ever since we got up from breakfast. He glanced at it when I spoke and, for a moment, it looked as if he were on the point of opening his fingers and letting the whole lot fall overboard. I believe he was tempted to do so. I shall never forget that man afraid of his letters.

"Have you been long out from Europe?" he asked me.

"Not very. Not quite eight months," I told him. "I left a ship in Samarang with a hurt back and have been in the hospital in Singapore some weeks."

He sighed.

"Trade is very bad here."

"Indeed!"

"Hopeless! . . . See these geese?"

With the hand holding the letters he pointed out to me what resembled a patch of snow creeping and swaying across the distant part of his compound. It disappeared behind some bushes.

"The only geese on the East Coast," Almayer informed me in a perfunctory mutter without a spark of faith, hope or pride. Thereupon, with the same absence of any sort of sustaining spirit, he declared his intention to select a fat bird and send him on board for us not later than next day.

I had heard of these largesses before. He conferred a goose as if it were a sort of Court decoration given only to the tried friends of the house. I had expected more pomp in the ceremony. The gift had surely its special quality, multiple and rare. From the only flock on the East Coast! He did not make half enough of it. That man did not understand his opportunities. However, I thanked him at some length.

"You see," he interrupted abruptly in a very peculiar tone, "the worst of this country is that one is not able to realize . . . it's impossible to realize . . ." His voice sank into a languid mutter. "And when one has very large interests . . . very important interests . . ." he finished faintly . . . "up the river."

We looked at each other. He astonished me by giving a start and making a very queer grimace.

"Well, I must be off," he burst out hurriedly. "So long!"

At the moment of stepping over the gangway he checked himself, though, to give me a mumbled invitation to dine at his house that evening with my captain, an invitation which I accepted. I don't think it could have been possible for me to refuse.

I like the worthy folk who will talk to you of the exercise of free will "at any rate for practical purposes." Free, is it? For practical purposes! Bosh! How could I have refused to dine with that man? I did not refuse simply because I could not refuse. Curiosity, a healthy desire for a change of cooking, common civility, the talk and the smiles of the previous twenty days, every condition of my existence at that moment and place made irresistibly for acceptance; and, crowning all that, there was the ignorance, the igno-

rance, I say, the fatal want of foreknowledge to counterbalance these imperative conditions of the problem. A refusal would have appeared perverse and insane. Nobody unless a surly lunatic would have refused. But if I had not got to know Almayer pretty well it is almost certain there would never have been a line of mine in print.

I accepted then—and I am paying yet the price of my sanity. The possessor of the only flock of geese on the East Coast is responsible for the existence of some fourteen volumes, so far. The number of geese he had called into being under adverse climatic conditions was considerably more than fourteen. The tale of volumes will never overtake the counting of heads, I am safe to say; but my ambitions point not exactly that way, and whatever the pangs the toil of writing has cost me I have always thought kindly of Almayer.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

And in this way Conrad met the man who became the central figure of his first book. Almayer is an interesting figure, is he not? Certainly he is a puzzling character; one can see how Conrad would think about him afterward, and wonder what had made him what he was, and what became of him, and so gradually there grew up in his mind the story of *Almayer's Folly*.

Does this essay begin well? What is good about the opening?

The essay really deals with two subjects; what are they? Suggest a title for the first few pages; another title that would fit the rest of the essay.

Is there even a third subject? The essay is a flexible form of writing, permitting one to ramble from one subject to another. Is there any connection between the several topics?

Conrad says elsewhere: "My task is, by the power of the

written word, to make you hear, to make you feel,—it is, before all, to make you see." Has he done these three things in this essay? What things does he make you "see" most clearly?

Observe the description of the day on page 73. What words in this are especially well chosen? Point out other good descriptions in the essay. Does Conrad's use of native words—serang, etc.—add anything to the effect?

Have you ever been to a strange place, very different from your usual surroundings? Can you describe it so as to make others feel its strangeness? Or have you ever met odd characters, persons who set you wondering what made them so? Try writing an essay on A Strange Place, or on An Odd Character.

If this essay of Conrad's has interested you, you will want to read more of his work. Even this sketch shows two characteristics of his writings: he takes you into strange corners of the earth, and he chooses unusual people for his characters. If you like Conrad, you will like him very much. Perhaps the best book to begin with is *Typhoon*. Other good ones are *Lord Jim, Youth,* and *Heart of Darkness*. The essay here given is taken from the book *A Personal Record,* a rambling autobiography covering his earlier years.

R. L. S.

JAMES M. BARRIE

JAMES M. BARRIE

James Matthew Barrie (1860–), one of the chief English writers of to-day, was born in Kirriemuir, a tiny Scotch village. His father was a weaver; the family lived in a four-room cottage; James was the ninth of a family of ten children, yet the father managed to send two of his sons through the university. James prepared for college at Dumfries Academy. Here he wrote humorous articles for the school magazine, and even attempted a novel, which was never published. He belonged to an amateur dramatic club, and wrote several plays for it. He went to Edinburgh University, where he is remembered as a shy lad, fond of reading. He acted as dramatic critic for an Edinburgh paper, a position which he valued chiefly because it gave him free admission to the theatre.

When he took his degree in 1882, his mind was set upon a literary career. The way to this opened when he secured a position as editorial writer on a Nottingham paper. The work was hard. He had to write two columns of editorials every day, and twice a week an additional column. For all this he received £3 a week. He also wrote articles and sent them to London journals, which promptly sent them back. Finally one editor accepted an article and asked for another. Barrie wrote the editor asking if he should come to London. He said no, so Barrie gave up his position and came. From 1884 to 1890 he was a free-lance journalist in London, and soon his articles were appearing in the leading weeklies. For the *St. James Gazette* he wrote a series of short stories and sketches of Scottish life, based on his memories of Kirriemuir. In 1888 he gathered these together to make his first book, *Auld Licht Idylls*. The novelty of the subject—no other writer of fiction had dealt with Scotch village life—the delicious humor, the moving pathos of the stories won for the young author a friendly reception. His next book, *When a Man's Single*, the story of a young journalist, is entertaining, but not one of his

best books. But his next work, *A Window in Thrums,* in which he returns to Scotch village life, is a little masterpiece. When Robert Louis Stevenson read it, he wrote to Barrie: "There are now two of us whom the Shirra [Sir Walter Scott] might have patted on the head." The success of this book encouraged Barrie to give up journalism and devote himself to literature. His next book was *My Lady Nicotine,* a series of amusing essays on smoking. Then came *The Little Minister* (1891), his first novel. It contained some delightful portraits of Scottish character, but as a novel it showed the weakness of all his novels, an inability to handle a plot. The story simply gets lost.

The next year saw the production of his first play, a comedy called *Walker, London.* Soon after, Barrie had a severe attack of pneumonia. He was nursed back to health by Mary Angell, who had taken the leading part in his play, and in 1894 they were married. The match was not a happy one, and resulted in a separation some years later. A second play, *The Professor's Love Story,* was successful in England and in America. Charles Frohman cabled to Barrie that if he would make a play out of *The Little Minister,* he would provide an actress who would make its fortune. This led to Barrie's coming to America, in 1896. He met the actress, Maude Adams, and promised to make a play for her. But two more books were to be written first. *Sentimental Tommy,* a novel which began in Thrums and ended in London, is a sort of idealized autobiography: Tommy is not Barrie, but Tommy's childhood and literary aspirations are certainly Barrie's. In the meantime Barrie had lost his mother, and in 1896 he published *Margaret Ogilvy,* one of the most perfect tributes to a mother ever written. This is one passage: "When you looked into my mother's eyes you knew, as if He had told you, why God sent her into the world,—it was to open the minds of all who looked to beautiful thoughts. And that is the beginning and end of literature."

In 1897 *The Little Minister* was produced on the stage, and was very successful; in America it had a run of three hundred nights. Then came *Tommy and Grizel,* a novel, continuing the story of *Sentimental Tommy.* Barrie had been alternating be-

tween the novel and the drama for some time; from now on the drama was to be first. In 1901 *Quality Street* was produced, Maude Adams playing the principal part, and added one more to his successes. The next year saw the production of *The Admirable Crichton,* a play which offered a keen criticism of English society. The same year he published *The Little White Bird,* a fantastic story, remembered because out of one chapter he was to develop his most famous play, *Peter Pan.* Two of Barrie's deepest interests are the love of children and a fondness for making believe. In *Peter Pan,* a fairy play about children, these two interests unite; it is Barrie at his best. The scene is Kensington Gardens, a favorite walk of his; the dog *Nana* had its origin in a St. Bernard which was Barrie's constant companion. The children who play at being pirates are Barrie's early playmates, whose games are described in *Sentimental Tommy.* First produced in 1904, the play has been revived in London every year since then. Recently Barrie made a perpetual gift of all the income from the play to a hospital for sick children in London. But this was not the end of Barrie's dramatic triumphs. *What Every Woman Knows,* a comedy of Scottish life, *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose,* two plays of the supernatural, and a group of one-act plays make a remarkable record of dramatic achievement.

His literary work has brought him both wealth and honor. In 1903 he was made a baronet, so that he is now Sir James Barrie. In 1922 he was elected rector of St. Andrews University, and the same year he was made a member of the Order of Merit, a group limited to twenty-four of the most distinguished living Englishmen. In 1928 a collection of his plays was published, complete in one volume. In 1929 appeared a biography by J. A. Hammerton entitled *Barrie, the Story of a Genius.*

R. L. S.*

JAMES M. BARRIE

THESE familiar initials are, I suppose, the best beloved in recent literature, certainly they are the sweetest to me, but there was a time when my mother could not abide them. She said "That Stevenson man" with a sneer, and it was never easy to her to sneer. At thought of him her face would become almost hard, which seems incredible, and she would knit her lips and fold her arms, and reply with a stiff "oh" if you mentioned his aggravating name. In the novels we have a way of writing of our heroine, "she drew herself up haughtily," and when mine draw themselves up haughtily I see my mother thinking of Robert Louis Stevenson. He knew her opinion of him, and would write, "My ears tingled yesterday; I sair doubt she has been miscalling me again." But the more she miscalled him the more he delighted in her, and she was informed of this, and at once said "The scoundrel!" If you would know what was his unpardonable crime, it was this, he wrote better books than mine.

I remember the day she found it out, which was not, however, the day she admitted it. That day, when I should have been at my work, she came upon me in the kitchen, *The Master of Ballantrae* beside me, but I was not reading: my head lay heavy on the table and to her anxious eyes, I doubt not, I was the picture of woe. "Not writing!" I echoed, no, I was not writing, I saw no use in ever trying

*From *Margaret Ogilvy*, by James M. Barrie, copyrighted, Charles Scribner's Sons.

to write again. And down, I suppose, went my head once more. She misunderstood, and thought the blow had fallen; I had awakened to the discovery, always dreaded by her, that I had written myself dry; I was no better than an empty ink-bottle. She wrung her hands, but indignation came to her with my explanation, which was that while R. L. S. was at it we others were only 'prentices cutting our fingers on his tools. "I could never thole* his books," said my mother immediately, and indeed vindictively.

"You have not read any of them," I reminded her.

"And never will," said she with spirit.

And I have no doubt that she called him a dark character that very day. For weeks too, if not for months, she adhered to her determination not to read him, though I, having come to my senses and seen that there is a place for the 'prentice, was taking a pleasure, almost malicious, in putting *The Master of Ballantrae* in her way. I would place it on her table so that it said good morning to her when she rose. She would frown, and carrying it downstairs, as if she had it in the tongs, replace it on its bookshelf. I would wrap it up in the cover she had made for the latest Carlyle: she would skin it contemptuously and again bring it down. I would hide her spectacles in it, and lay it on top of the clothes-basket and prop it up invitingly open against her tea-pot. And at last I got her, though I forget by which of many contrivances. What I recall vividly is a keyhole view, to which another member of the family invited me. Then I saw my mother wrapped up in *The Master of Ballantrae* and muttering the music to herself, nodding her head in approval, and taking a stealthy glance

*Thole, endure.

at the foot of each page before she began at the top. Nevertheless she had an ear for the door, for when I bounced in she had been too clever for me; there was no book to be seen, only an apron on her lap and she was gazing out at the window. Some such conversation as this followed:

"You have been sitting very quietly, mother."

"I always sit quietly, I never do anything, I'm just a finished stocking."

"Have you been reading?"

"Do I ever read at this time of day?"

"What is that in your lap?"

"Just my apron."

"Is that a book beneath the apron?"

"It might be a book."

"Let me see."

"Go away with you to your work."

But I lifted the apron. "Why, it's *The Master of Ballantrae!*" I exclaimed, shocked.

"So it is!" said my mother, equally surprised. But I looked sternly at her, and perhaps she blushed.

"Well, what do you think: not nearly equal to mine?" said I with humor.

"Nothing like them," she said determinedly.

"Not a bit," said I, though whether with a smile or a groan is immaterial; they would have meant the same thing. Should I put the book back on its shelf? I asked, and she replied that I could put it wherever I liked for all she cared, so long as I took it out of her sight (the implication was that it had stolen on to her lap while she was looking out at the window). My behavior may seem small, but I gave her a last chance, for I said that some people found it

a book there was no putting down until they reached the last page.

"I'm no that kind," replied my mother.

Nevertheless our old game with the haver of a thing, as she called it, was continued, with this difference, that it was now she who carried the book covertly upstairs, and I who replaced it on the shelf, and several times we caught each other in the act, but not a word said either of us; we were grown self-conscious. Much of the play no doubt I forget, but one incident I remember clearly. She had come down to sit beside me while I wrote, and sometimes, when I looked up, her eye was not on me, but on the shelf where *The Master of Ballantrae* stood inviting her. Mr. Stevenson's books are not for the shelf, they are for the hand; even when you lay them down, let it be on the table for the next comer. Being the most sociable that man has penned in our time, they feel very lonely up there in a stately row. I think their eye is on you the moment you enter the room, and so you are drawn to look at them, and you take a volume down with the impulse that induces one to unchain the dog. And the result is not dissimilar, for in another moment you two are at play. Is there any other modern writer who gets round you in this way? Well, he had given my mother the look which in the ballroom means, "Ask me for this waltz," and she ettled* to do it, but felt that her more dutiful course was to sit out the dance with this other less entertaining partner. I wrote on doggedly, but could hear the whispering.

"Am I to be a wall-flower?" asked James Durie reproachfully. (It must have been leap-year.)

*Ettled, was inclined.

"Speak lower," replied my mother, with an uneasy look at me.

"Pooh!" said James contemptuously, "that kail-runtle!"*

"I winna have him miscalled," said my mother, frowning.

"I am done with him," said James (wiping his cane with his cambric handkerchief), and his sword clattered deliciously (I cannot think this was accidental), which made my mother sigh. Like the man he was, he followed up his advantage with a comparison that made me dip viciously.

"A prettier sound that," said he, clanking his sword again, "than the clack-clack of your young friend's shuttle."

"Whist!" cried my mother, who had seen me dip.

"Then give me your arm," said James, lowering his voice.

"I dare not," answered my mother. "He's so touchy about you."

"Come, come," he pressed her, "you are certain to do it sooner or later, so why not now?"

"Wait till he has gone for his walk," said my mother; "and, forby that, I'm ower old to dance with you."

"How old are you?" he inquired.

"You're gey an' pert!" cried my mother.

"Are you seventy?"

"Off and on," she admitted.

"Pooh," he said, "a mere girl!"

She replied instantly, "I'm no to be catched with chaff"; but she smiled and rose as if he had stretched out his hand and got her by the finger-tip.

After that they whispered so low (which they could do

*Kail-runtle, cabbage stem.

as they were now much nearer each other) that I could catch only one remark. It came from James, and seems to show the tenor of their whisperings, for his words were, "Easily enough, if you slip me beneath your shawl."

That is what she did, and furthermore she left the room guiltily, muttering something about redding up the drawers. I suppose I smiled wanly to myself, or conscience must have been nibbling at my mother, for in less than five minutes she was back, carrying her accomplice openly, and she thrust him with positive viciousness into the place where my Stevenson had lost a tooth (as the writer whom he most resembled would have said). And then like a good mother she took up one of her son's books and read it most determinedly. It had become a touching incident to me, and I remember how we there and then agreed upon a compromise: she was to read the enticing thing just to convince herself of its inferiority.

The Master of Ballantrae is not the best. Conceive the glory, which was my mother's, of knowing from a trustworthy source that there are at least three better awaiting you on the same shelf. She did not know Alan Breck* yet, and he was as anxious to step down as Mr. Bally himself. John Silver was there, getting into his leg, so that she should not have to wait a moment, and roaring, "I'll lay to that!" when she told me consolingly that she could not thole pirate stories. Not to know these gentlemen, what is it like? It is like never having been in love. But they are in the house! That is like knowing that you will fall in love to-morrow morning. With one word, by drawing one mournful face, I could have got my mother to abjure the

*Alan Breck, the chief character in *Kidnapped*.

jam-shelf—nay, I might have managed it by merely saying that she had enjoyed *The Master of Ballantrae*. For you must remember that she only read it to persuade herself (and me) of its unworthiness, and that the reason she wanted to read the others was to get further proof. All this she made plain to me, eying me a little anxiously the while, and of course I accepted the explanation. Alan is the biggest child of them all, and I doubt not that she thought so, but curiously enough her views of him are among the things I have forgotten. But how enamored she was of *Treasure Island,* and how faithful she tried to be to me all the time she was reading it! I had to put my hands over her eyes to let her know that I had entered the room, and even then she might try to read between my fingers, coming to herself presently, however, to say "It's a haver* of a book."

"Those pirate stories are so uninteresting," I would reply without fear, for she was too engrossed to see through me. "Do you think you will finish this one?"

"I may as well go on with it since I have begun it," my mother says, so slily that my sister and I shake our heads at each other to imply, "Was there ever such a woman!"

"There are none of those one-legged scoundrels in my books," I say.

"Better without them," she replies promptly.

"I wonder, mother, what it is about the man that so infatuates the public?"

"He takes no hold of me," she insists. "I would a hantle† rather read your books."

I offer obligingly to bring one of them to her, and now

*Haver, foolish talk. †Hantle, a good deal.

she looks at me suspiciously. "You surely believe I like yours best," she says with instant anxiety, and I soothe her by assurances, and retire advising her to read on, just to see if she can find out how he misleads the public. "Oh, I may take a look at it again by and by," she says indifferently, but nevertheless the probability is that as the door shuts the book opens, as if by some mechanical contrivance. I remember how she read *Treasure Island,* holding it close to the ribs of the fire (because she could not spare a moment to rise and light the gas), and how, when bed-time came, and we coaxed, remonstrated, scolded, she said quite fiercely, clinging to the book, "I dinna lay my head on a pillow this night till I see how that laddie got out of the barrel."

After this, I think, he was as bewitching as the laddie in the barrel to her—Was he not always a laddie in the barrel himself, climbing in for apples while we all stood around, like gamins, waiting for a bite? He was the spirit of boyhood tugging at the skirts of this old world of ours and compelling it to come back and play. And I suppose my mother felt this, as so many have felt it: like others she was a little scared at first to find herself skipping again, with this masterful child at the rope, but soon she gave him her hand and set off with him for the meadow, not an apology between the two of them for the author left behind. But never to the end did she admit (in words) that he had a way with him which was beyond her son. "Silk and sacking, that is what we are," she was informed, to which she would reply obstinately, "Well, then, I prefer sacking."

"But if he had been your son?"

"But he is not."

"You wish he were?"

"I dinna deny but what I could have found room for him."

And still at times she would smear him with the name of black (to his delight when he learned the reason). That was when some podgy red-sealed blue-crossed letter arrived from Vailima,* inviting me to journey thither. (His directions were, "You take the boat at San Francisco, and then my place is the second to the left.") Even London seemed to her to carry me so far away that I often took a week to the journey (the first six days in getting her used to the idea), and these letters terrified her. It was not the finger of Jim Hawkins she now saw beckoning me across the seas, it was John Silver, waving a crutch. Seldom, I believe, did I read straight through one of these Vailima letters; when in the middle I suddenly remembered who was upstairs and what she was probably doing, and I ran to her, three steps at a jump, to find her, lips pursed, hands folded, a picture of gloom.

"I have a letter from——"

"So I have heard."

"Would you like to hear it?"

"No."

"Can you not abide him?"

"I canna thole him."

"Is he a black?"

"He is all that."

Well, Vailima was the one spot on earth I had any great

*Vailima, an island in the South Sea, where Stevenson spent the closing years of his life.

craving to visit, but I think she always knew I would never leave her. Some time, she said, she should like me to go, but not until she was laid away. "And how small I have grown this last winter. Look at my wrists. It canna be long now." No, I never thought of going, was never absent for a day from her without reluctance, and never walked so quickly as when I was going back. In the meantime that happened which put an end forever to my scheme of travel. I shall never go up The Road of Loving Hearts* now, on "a wonderful clear night of stars," to meet the man coming toward me on a horse. It is still a wonderful clear night of stars, but the road is empty. So I never saw the dear king of us all. But before he had written books he was in my part of the country with a fishing wand in his hand, and I like to think that I was the boy who met him that day by Queen Margaret's burn, where the rowans are, and busked a fly for him, and stood watching, while his lithe figure rose and fell as he cast and hinted back from the crystal waters of Noran-side.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

James M. Barrie's *Margaret Ogilvy* is a tribute to his mother. It tells of his beginnings as an author, and how, when he was writing the sketches of Scotch village life called *Auld Licht Idylls,* she helped him with memories of her girlhood, and how rejoiced she was when his articles were accepted.

In this essay we meet three persons: Barrie himself, his mother, and R. L. S. What do we learn about Barrie's relations to his mother?

*Stevenson's home at Vailima was on a mountain. The native chiefs came with their followers and built a road for him, calling it The Road of Loving Hearts.

What was his opinion of Stevenson? Why was he discouraged about his own work? What gave him heart to go on?

Why did Barrie's mother refuse to read Stevenson? What did this show? What were some of the other traits of her character?

What do we learn about Barrie's relations with R. L. S.? What does he say about Stevenson's books having an eye on you? Which books does he prefer?

Do you find any humor in this essay? Where? The passage where Barrie imagines James Durie talking to his mother is a good example of Barrie's power of fancy: the power which enabled him to write *Peter Pan,* his best-known play.

Are the passages in dialogue in this essay well done? Note how short the speeches are, yet how telling. They show the skill in writing dialogue which was to make Barrie a famous dramatist.

Note the opening of the essay, how the author introduces, even in the first sentence, the two themes of his essay. Now turn to the end; what does that sentence deal with? Is the ending well done? What does it leave in your mind?

Read the sketch of Barrie's life. In what ways did his interests while a boy at the academy foreshadow what he was to become?

If you enjoyed this essay, you will want to read the book from which it is taken, *Margaret Ogilvy.* One of the chapters, called "What I Should Be," tells of his very first attempts to write. If you cannot get this book, try *Auld Licht Idylls,* a book of short stories. Or—especially for older readers—get one of his plays, say *What Every Woman Knows* or *The Admirable Crichton.*

Or this essay may lead you down another road, to Robert Louis Stevenson. He has a book of short stories, *New Arabian Nights,* that is full of thrills. And then there are the novels: after *Treasure Island,* try either *Kidnapped* or *David Balfour* or *The Master of Ballantrae.* If you like essays, his *Virginibus Puerisque* will please you. The title is not attractive, but when translated it reads "For Girls and Boys."

Or this essay may invite you to read other essays dealing with books and writers. You will find them in Henry van Dyke's *Companionable Books* or his *The Man Behind the Book*. Or get W. D. Howells's *Literary Friends and Acquaintances* or W. L. Phelps's *Some Makers of American Literature*.

TIMESQUARESE

ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

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Robert Haven Schauffler (1879–) has won distinction in three arts: literature, music, and sculpture. He was born in Austria, the son of American parents who were abroad as missionaries. He came to America as a child, and received his education at Northwestern University and at Princeton, where he was editor of *The Nassau Literary Magazine*. He continued his studies later at the University of Berlin, and studied the 'cello under distinguished masters in London. Tennis is his favorite sport; in 1906 he won the national tennis championship (doubles) at Rome, and played in the Olympic Games. He married Katherine Wilson, who was a pianist, and with her and Edwin Grasse, a violinist, formed the Grasse Trio, playing in concert tours. As a sculptor he has had his work shown at the exhibitions of the National Sculpture Society. During the World War he was in active service; he held the rank of first lieutenant, and went to France with the Seventy-ninth Division. He was severely wounded before Montfaucon in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. He has contributed widely to magazines, such as *The Independent* (of which he was musical editor), *Collier's, Century, Atlantic Monthly,* and *Metropolitan*. His books are chiefly in the form of poetry and essays. Volumes of poetry include *Scum o' the Earth, Magic Flame,* and *Hobnails in Eden*. His books of essays are: *The Musical Amateur, The Joyful Heart, Fiddler's Luck,* and *Peter Pantheism,* from which comes the selection here given. If you care for music, you will particularly enjoy *Fiddler's Luck*. It is largely autobiographical, as are many of his essays.

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In these topsyturvy days when the white collar is fast becoming a badge of economic inferiority, I sometimes wonder how a cultured newsboy would make out in Times Square. I mean a young Harvard graduate with a Phi Beta Kappa key and a carefully thought out theory that there must be some natural affinity between filthy hands and filthy lucre. Adapting his literary English to the informal style of his profession, he would announce in well-modulated accents: *"Here you are, paper! World, Journal, Herald, American!"*

The graduate would not prosper. Nobody would hear a word he said. The riot of traffic and traffic cops would drown his voice completely. And his roughneck competitors would run him out of business with their shatteringly effective cries of: *"Yah—by—bee! Woil, Joinl, Hairl, Mairkin!"*

When it comes to the spoken word, the experienced newsboy is a pragmatist. Instinctively he knows that the only good selling talk in Times Square is the kind that will carry to the public, although the combined full organs of Broadway and Seventh Avenue are blaring with every stop out, and with assistant organists jazzing on the pedals. He lends ear to the inspired whisperings of necessity. In defiance of lexicographers, he formulates his own language

*From *Peter Pantheism*, copyrighted by R. H. Schauffler (Macmillan).

along the lines of the largest effectiveness and the least resistance.

In order to create an effective selling slogan like "yah—by—bee!" out of such a worthless, white-collar formula as "Here you are, paper!" the real newsboy sheds most of his consonants, like the effete luxuries shed by an army in the field. He shatters the vowels to bits and remoulds them nearer to the trade's desire. The weak, flat ones emerge from his language-mill, strong, piercing, sonorous. The unfit are ruthlessly scrapped. Compression, punch, driving power, convenience and ease of machine-gun repetition are the inexorable laws of this new language, as they are of 42nd Street and Broadway. Timesquarese bears somewhat the same relation to literary English that early French bore to the Latin out of which it evolved under the pressure of the then modern conditions.

On the purely materialistic plane this new pragmatic language is a triumphant success. A long course of trial and error has brought it up to the highest possible efficiency for meeting actual competitive conditions. Under the relaxed stress of slightly more bucolic surroundings than Times Square,—say at Broadway and 28th Street, the first part of the newsboy's invitation flowers into something more elaborate and elegant than 42nd Street's brutal *"Yah!"* "Here you are, paper!" becomes *"Heiah pypurée!"* Please note that the newsboy, in his quest for easy, sonorous effectiveness, has reinvented a part of that stirring call, "Heia-ha," which Wagner, on the identical quest, put into the mouths of those enterprising maidens, the Valkyries.

And even *"pypurée!"* the second half of the 28th Street call, has its own shred of highbrow aura as well. "Pypurée"

takes one back to the classical name for the graceful ancestors of paper, the papyri. The poet who invented this full-throated word must have been a clairvoyant. Down in the reeds by the river he fell into a prophetic trance wherein he foresaw, beyond the clanging aisles of the Christian era, Broadway with its ten-ear-power tumult; and realized why his plant must bear a sonorous name.

This is not an isolated instance. Common life has a way of beating out on its vulgar anvil, expressions that seem as highbrow as *"Heiah pypurée!"* There is a lake in the back woods of Maine, called Telos. It sounds like the Greek word for "the limit," though in reality it is a contraction of the Indian name "Telosemis." But the old woodsmen did not know that, and thought of it as "Tealoss," a record doubtless of some ancient accident to a supply canoe. So, to balance things, they named the neighboring lake, "Coffee-Loss." This has now turned into the Greek-looking "Cophelos," and is even thought of by certain specially cultured folk as κόφελος.

But to return from New England to New York. The pragmatism of effective ease is not confined to the newsboys. It is paramount wherever vocal cords compete with clamor or space. The street-car conductor demands, not "fares please!" but *"face bliss!"*—for all the world as though he were dispensing a line of cold cream, shaving soap or toilet powder. He makes "wuzay?" do duty for "what did you say?"—"sore eye!" for "that is all right!" and "Q!" for "thank you!"

The subway guard bellows *"latumow!"*, *"wotchastap!"* and *"movopnsanrcah!"* The train boy, staggering between the seats under the products of Curtis and Hearst, an-

nounces: *"Olla laytess ju sout: Laydee Sew Joinl an de Worst Magazines!"*

The other day, before leaving the sounding purlieus of Pier 14 on a Fall River boat, I heard a bored African voice announce: *"Lascallshawzgownsh!"*—a masterly contraction of the steward's time-honored formula: "Last call! All ashore as is goin' ashore!" Note how "call" and "all" are telescoped, and how the final "shore" expires before the vowel, as if the gangplank were already seen to be aboard.

In his brilliant treatise on *The American Language,* Mr. Mencken contends that the characteristic New York change of the *ur* to the *oi* sounds, as in the newsboy's pronunciation of "Journal," is a Yiddish contribution. But even if so, considerations of ease and commercial sonority must have come in as factors.

That tendency toward open vowels which adds the *ee* to *"pypurée"* at 28th Street, is responsible for the English train boy's translation of "lunchbaskets!" into the Italian-sounding *"unchi-bahki!"* This mutation is reminiscent of the fruit peddler who turns "Nice apples!" into *"Nyzee appoh!",* and somewhat of the "Buy clothes for cash!" man with his offer to *"Buy geahsh glow!"* which, on occasion, contracts into something very like an expletive, in *"Buy gosh!"*

Noise conditions in the playground may account for such finely carrying names as "Skinnay!", and for ma's summoning shriek of "Sam—mee!" with its characteristic rise of a major sixth.

Military commands show the same trend to sonority. "Shoulder arms!" is revamped into "Shouldah, harm!" In "Forward march!" the final consonant of the first word

disappears as useless, and only two letters of the second are worth keeping. So that the command becomes "Forwahr, hart!"

Choral song, too, often distorts language, especially if every one is trying to out-carol his neighbor. When a raw recruit of my acquaintance first heard:

"It's a long wy to Teeperairee,
To the Swedish girl I know,"

he was puzzled as to why the Swedish girl, herself presumably a servant, should have gone to Ireland, the land of good servants. It was a case of carrying coals to Newcastle, or Fords to Detroit, or hubbub to Times Square.

In dynamic luxuriance at least, America "licks creation." We are noise-poor, in the sense that some people are land-poor, and the fat are flesh-poor. This circumstance has had its influence on the formation of the American vulgate. In Times Square a single negative might be drowned. But a form of words like "I don't want none o' yer lip" has an ampler chance to convey a feeling of true unfriendliness under conditions of low audibility. And one reason why the double comparative shares the popularity of the twin negative is that it has "a more sweller show to be hoid."

Do not the intuitive ease, convenience, compactness, vividness, simplicity and effectiveness of our American vulgate, argue a fatally inert lack of adaptability in literary English, like that which once brought about the overthrow of the dinosaur? Is the lingo of the people destined to overwhelm the language of culture, and survive as the fittest? And, while the noises of earth intensify their present pitiless crescendo, will not this common speech grow

commoner and commoner, until at last it reaches the Dead Sea level of Timesquarese?

One fears that language has begun a race with noise comparable to that now going on between projectiles and armor. What will happen, in the course of this race, to the cherished tongue of Shakespeare and Milton? Ever since writing was invented, the human eye has been the chief conservative force in language and literature. It is much more of a formalist than the ear, resents innovation more impatiently, and clings with fonder devotion to the fruits of cultivation. But what if the eye's hour has struck?

Already the newspaper and the magazine are heavily rivalled by radio; and now there comes a significant new development of an older machine. M. Émile Pathé is the leading European authority on the phonograph. He solemnly assures me that an invention is soon to be placed on the market, which is going to work profound changes in many of the customs of mankind, including language and literature, and even in the human body itself.

This revolutionary invention is a very cheap and foolproof kind of phonograph recording apparatus. It will replace the typewriter, the stenographer and the present forms of dictograph, just as these once replaced the pen, and as the pen replaced the stylus. No longer will the haughty young Loreleis of shorthand, with pencils in their gleaming hair, distract the tired business man from his exhaustion.

He will talk his letter not to Lorelei, but to a specially prepared disk of paper, four or five inches across, and no thicker than ordinary notepaper. It will be spun by electricity on the desk under his nose.

His customary speaking voice will emboss the message on this paper. He will mail it in an ordinary envelope. His correspondent will place the disk on his phonograph, and hear a life-sized voice repeat a life-sized message. He will answer back and file the disk for reference.

This invention will throw large numbers of girls out of employment, profoundly affect the typewriter industry, and mean to business and the professions enormous savings in overhead, time, distraction, inaccuracy and temper. Circular literature will become a serious menace to the printing press. Round books and magazines for the ear will burst upon a startled world. They will consist of packs of paper disks, bound together so loosely that each in turn can take its place in the phonograph without being detached. You may lie back with closed eyes while your favorite author reads you his latest book, or Hackett reads *Macbeth*. This is not practicable to-day on account of the expense and bulk of the heavy composition records. But to-morrow,—thanks to the admirable compactness of the paper disk, five times as many books may be crowded into a five-foot rack of literature. The complete works of Plato and O. Henry will go into a small soup tureen. . . .

In time, says M. Pathé, nothing which is now done by the printing press—except posters—will be foreign to the nature of the phonograph. Even our so-called "circulars" may eventually justify their name by losing their corners and becoming round.

The eyes of modern man have been badly overstrained by looking at small black marks on pieces of white paper,—an artificial activity which has been going on for only a minute fraction of humanity's life on earth. That the eye

was not built to stand up under such a strain is shown by the plague of spectacles. This organ was intended, instead, to search the primeval distance for game and enemies. On the other hand, we listened to the minutiæ of speech many millenniums before writing was dreamed of. Our ears are fitted by evolution to stand almost any test. Their larger use will give the tired eyes a much-needed vacation. And, in a few decades, if M. Pathé is right, the world will be almost as unspectacled a place as a Parisian woman's club.

Of course, the paper disk will not do away entirely with the printed book. But the round form of literature will make even swifter gains over the rectangular than Timesquarese is making over the language of culture. It will be so much easier for a writer to talk his book onto a piece of paper than to scratch it there with a pencil or bang it there with a typewriter, that the dictation of would-be literature will be fatally encouraged. I say "fatally," because dictation can seldom be more than improvisation. And art is almost never improvised.

By attacking and suppressing the written word (the thing which has done most to conserve the quality of language), the new invention will work hand in glove with Timesquarese. When the literary eye at last abandons the struggle, and Timesquarese decides to take up Shakespeare, what may we expect? What, for instance, will it make of that passage in *King Richard III,* about "grim-visaged war" who has "smoothed his wrinkled front"?

> "And now—instead of mounting barbéd steeds . . .
> He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber."

When, in the war with noise, most of the foregoing con-

sonants have been eliminated as conscientious objectors, and the more delicate-minded slacker vowels have been roughly hazed and imbued with the fighting spirit, and the whole organization salted with hard-boiled veteran vowels to bring up the morale, these lines will perhaps emerge somewhat as follows:

Anow astada mounta barba stee,
He ky-purrees a loidy's chymberee.

Then, take the iridescent passage in Milton that comes after "Haste thee, nymph!"—about

"Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathéd smiles."

In obedience to the grim law of Timesquarese, this couplet will reduce to something like:

Quypa cracka wanta wy
Nodda backa reeda smy.

There is one thing to be said for this new version, however. Its Italianate sound is more in harmony than Milton's own lines are, with the nationality of the poem's title, *L'Allegro*.

When, on the other hand, the opening of Gray's *Elegy* is translated into the modern lingo of this our Melting Pot, its national flavor is quite different:

De coifew toe de nail oh party dye.

This recalls the negro bootblack as distinctly as the Miltonic example evokes the Neapolitan banana peddler.

Perhaps it is only my fancy, but the refrain of Kipling's *Recessional* beginning "Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet"—seems, in Timesquarese, more the utterance of the Irish conductor of a Broadway surface car, who is dimly troubled about the future of his newly adopted American language:

Lorgorra Hose, be wya yat,
Lasswee forgat, lasswe forgat!

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

On Broadway, at any hour, there are two streams of people, one moving north, one south. At 42d Street, Broadway cuts diagonally across Seventh Avenue, and two more streams of people are poured together. And 42d Street cuts across at right angles, and adds two more streams going east and west. Six sets of people going different directions, with clanging streetcars going north and south and east and west, with honking taxicabs dashing in and out, and the subway roaring beneath: this is Times Square, the busiest and noisiest spot in New York. And here is spoken Timesquarese.

What other title might be given to this essay? Why do you think the present title a good one?

Is the opening sentence a good beginning? Why?

What two subjects are discussed in this essay? Are they closely connected? The essay is a form of writing which allows one to ramble almost as he pleases, always provided that he keeps the reader interested. Does the author do this?

This essay tells of words distorted by newsboys, by streetcar conductors, in military commands, in songs, in street cries. Can you give other cases where words are twisted by popular usage? How about the language used in comic strips? in dialect stories?

Is there a "foreign section" in your city? What peculiar words are heard there?

What about the English of the sporting page of the newspaper?

If all these influences tend to change our language, what things tend to keep it as it is? Which set of influences—those working for change or those working for fixed standards, do you think is the stronger?

The subjects suggested below will serve either for oral discussion or written compositions.

Twisted Words.
Street Cries.
Words Used in Cartoons.
The English of the Sport Page.
How Southerners Speak (or New Englanders, or Westerners).
English as Foreigners Speak It.
Street English and Good English.
Radio Announcers as English Teachers.

THE ART OF BEING OUTSHONE

EDGAR J. GOODSPEED

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Edgar J. Goodspeed bears a name that has been connected with the University of Chicago since its beginning, for his father, Doctor Thomas W. Goodspeed, was for many years registrar there. Edgar was born in Quincy, Ill., in 1871. He took his college course at Denison University, later studying at Yale, the University of Chicago, and in Berlin. His special field is Greek, and he now holds a professorship in that subject at the University of Chicago. Among his books is a translation of the New Testament into modern English. As an essayist he has many gifts: a firm, polished style, unfailing good temper, a fine sense of humor, learning lightly carried, and the power to illuminate the present by the past. All these qualities are seen in the essay here given. He has published one volume of essays, entitled *Things Seen and Heard.*

THE ART OF BEING OUTSHONE*

EDGAR J. GOODSPEED

I

Somebody is forever sending me literature about how to shine at dinners and in the social circle generally. It seems there are books full of anecdotes, repartees, and bright remarks, which, if memorized and opportunely remembered, are supposed to enliven these occasions. The master of these books dazzles and entertains every circle he enters. He holds the spot-light and the centre of the stage. Murmurs of admiration attend his brilliant sallies. He is, in short, the life of the party.

Others, it appears, just as good as he, go home depressed and disheartened. They have not shone. The spot-light has not rested well pleased upon them. They have been obscure. Sound cause for gloom! Their minds, destitute of the thousand epigrams of the master spirits of the ages, have contributed nothing brilliant to the conversation.

It is evident from the amount and tone of this literature that one must shine to be happy. Without shining, life is not worth while. One is a failure, and might as well give up. It is the obviousness of this truth that provides a public for the literature. People have, indeed, often felt the sense of discouragement these circulars describe, and are glad to find a promise of relief, even though at the fateful moment

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they fumble in memory for the bright saying of Marcus Aurelius* or Mark Twain which the occasion so pressingly demands. Perhaps, after all, it may be more practical to go to a dinner with just one bright but borrowed remark stored up for the occasion, and, watching narrowly your opportunity, to hurl that, like Bruce's heart, into the fray, than to carry in such a sackful of anecdotes gathered at random from five hundred minds.

There is of course nothing new about this yearning for notice and conspicuousness. It is an inheritance from childhood and even from antiquity. Epictetus† discussed it. It is hard, he admits, to hear another man discoursing brightly on a subject beyond your depth, and on which you have nothing to say. But courage! Another time the talk will be of grammar, and it will be your turn to shine.

The illuminating thing about this is that the fine old Stoic himself was not above the common desire to shine, only he had sense enough to see that no sensible person expects or wishes to do all the shining. Every dog is entitled to his day—that is, of course, if he can get it. I do not say he would have ordered the books advertised above; he knew he needed no such meretricious aids to luminosity, being convinced that, taking the season together, he and every other well-disciplined philosopher were sure in due time to get their conversational innings. But he was evidently strongly disposed to have those innings soon or late.

*Marcus Aurelius, a Roman emperor who was also a philosopher; his book, *Meditations*, contains many quotable sentences.

†Epictetus, a famous Greek philosopher. Both he and Marcus Aurelius belonged to the school of the Stoics, which taught that the end of man was to do his duty. The Epicureans taught that the end of man was to be happy.

It is odd that it did not occur to the ancient Stoic or the modern Epicurean that the true solution of the problem, which is evidently so vital to them, is the cultivation of the art of transition. To the master of transition, it matters not whether the talk be of the Taj Mahal or of the composition of rubber. Give him but the suspicion of a lull in the conversation and he will with a mere phrase bring it round to port.

Only last night on the way into the dining room I heard an accomplished converser lamenting the general lack of interest in Africa—one of his best themes. What weakness! Let him but contrive a set of good transitions, and I'll warrant he can bring the talk back to Africa though it have strayed as far afield as the nebula of Andromeda or the Great Hereafter. As thus: "How different that is from Africa, now!" or "You don't say so! Well, I remember once in Africa . . ."

Of course we all know the conversational superman; he has been with us since boyhood, to which period of development he properly belongs. He is always capping your modest contributions with something bigger. If you have slain your thousands, he has slain his tens of thousands. You timidly intimate that your assessed valuation is two thousand dollars; he cries that his is four. You say that you are to speak in Freeport; he says that they had previously asked him. You tell how long it took to drive a certain route; his time was better by hours. It does not matter that you happen later to detect much exaggeration in these quick rejoinders—as that his assessment is only about half yours. The mischief is done, or, rather, the success achieved. For evidently the skill of the thing lay in thinking quickly

of the better story and putting it over convincingly. It is not a matter of fact, but of art.

Such men are not liars. They are great hearty boys who have never learned the art of being outshone. Their fish are always bigger, their scores lower, their losses greater, their winnings larger, their operations dreadfuller than yours. They have no need of the thousand best epigrams of the world's five hundred brightest minds, nor need they, like Epictetus, wait for another day when the talk is of grammar in order to shine. Their simple art is to snatch a reflected glory from every other's remark and multiply it thirty, sixty, a hundred fold.

What a good thing it is that there are no such women! Yet this may seem to have an ungracious ring; which reminds us: Let us now praise gracious women, the noble army of hostesses and dinner partners who listen patiently and with interest marvellously sustained—or simulated—to your interminable anecdotes and expositions, which are often no better than the thousand best efforts of the world's master minds, to say the least. Surely if there be pretense in this, the Recording Angel, if he must jot it down, will never be better occupied than in dropping some of his tears upon the page.

II

I have just had a delightful interview with a charming old gentleman. I enjoyed it exceedingly, but as I look back upon it two or three things emerge like islands from a sea. He was, it appeared, the best student and the best speaker his ancient college had ever produced, and to this day his record has not been surpassed. He next formed the lauda-

ble ambition of making himself the best preacher in the country, and, from all I can gather, he made decided progress in that direction. But I am fearful that he has never progressed far in the gentler art of being outshone.

A distinguished editor, on being asked on what principle he chose the articles that he printed, said that if a thing was so absorbing that a man would stop eating his roast beef to listen to it, he thought it worth publishing. No fairer description of prandial achievement can well be framed. And yet, with hundreds of thousands of copies of the select epigrams of the master minds flying about and equipping the most ordinary people overnight to hold dinner tables spellbound, even the roast-beef test may fail. To have the art, literature, history, politics, and business of the world on the tip of your tongue (What a tongue, to have such a tip!) may deceive even the elect into supposing that you know something about them. Better not make any pauses,—except for the inevitable murmurs of admiration, which, it seems, are guaranteed,—else some dull, malicious fellow may ask a disconcerting question. Still, not if he is spellbound; the thing is unthinkable. But for safety's sake a good dashing transition should always be taken along, as a kind of conversational parachute, in case your gas fails.

I have long been thinking that our artists should be painting scenes in real life, such as an automobile salesman and his prey. But whose pencil could portray the dinner table at which two accomplished possessors of the thousand epigrams of the master spirits should meet? The imagination reels at the picture. Gastronomically, the dinner would of course be a failure, for no one would have a moment's attention to give the food. One would inevitably get

the jump upon the other at the start, and then, pausing presently for the inevitable murmur of admiration, would be dismayed to hear the other strike in with some apposite observation of Josh Billings or Hippocrates,* and feel the spot-light fading from his brow. Can he regain it? His adversary is forewarned by now, and, if he knows his stuff, will give him no further chance, but rather a much-needed lesson in the Art of Being Outshone.

This "hyperlampophobia," or dread of being outshone, has begun to affect literature. Where is the so-called hero of yore? In many a modern tale the hero is really the simplest, fondest, most blundering being in the whole cast. Is it not clear that the old-style smart individual who easily gets his own way in all circumstances—an obvious aristocratic type—is out of date? The modern hero does not command your homage; he appeals to your compassion. You perceive that the poor fellow needs help, and how you long to be at his side and warn and cheer him, as, helpless with horror, you behold him blindly plunging deeper and deeper into difficulties. Only when his situation has become absolutely irremediable does the author let up on him. All this, of course, is for your good, so that you may not feel yourself too palpably outshone.

Take the old detective story. All was hopelessly obscure until the great detective entered. It presented no particular difficulties to him. A few blood drops, cigarette stubs, or bits of tweed, and the thing was done, all by himself. But nowadays there is a whole school of detective literature from which the detective hero has actually disappeared! He has simply vanished, leaving no trace. The truth is, we

*Hippocrates, a famous physician of ancient Greece.

have grown tired of the omniscient detective who finds everything so easy, and prefer to see difficulties more democratically unravelled by a number of people, each contributing his bit and making the solution a social process.

Modern publicity methods have long since accustomed us to having our failings of every kind familiarly assumed and played upon, and we do not so much mind this unless our moral characters are impugned. Thus the frank challenge, "Why let Blunders in speech and writing put you at a Disadvantage? Beware of shabby English! Errors in Pronunciation can ruin the whole Effect of what you say!" while perhaps unconventional, does not offend us. Our English may be blundersome, shabby, and mispronounced, as the advertiser so calmly assumes, but if it is a bit informal at times, it is our own business, no doubt. But to approach us on the cool supposition that we go home from a party unhappy if we have not done all the talking is a different matter, and seems to assume that we are all indeed but children of a larger growth, if even that. To monopolize conversation is a thing no civilized man should ever want to do.

Psychologists suggest that it is really better for our mental health to do a good deal of listening, claiming that in this way we may get some of the stimulus and intellectual pabulum that our spirits require. Experienced diners-out, with a large and quick turnover, will certainly confirm this, telling to-night the best things they heard last night, but keeping silent long enough to pick up a few new trifles for to-morrow, when they sincerely hope to encounter a new circle of guests to try them on.

Such is, we believe, the democratic way of life, but it is not that of the conversational crammers, on the one hand,

or of Epictetus on the other. They both aim at a larger but slower business; at least, Epictetus did. This was his professorial bent: unhappy except when lecturing; an evident stranger to the joyful activity of the intercreative mind. But how much better, really, to match wits with some capable table companion, until some new phase of common experience or interpretation emerges, to the general joy! A far better thing this than lecturing each other alternate evenings, you to-night, I to-morrow night! Little genius in such division of labor.

For what we are here concerned with is of course nothing less than the art of conversation. How many a man who thinks he is talking well, if lengthily, has really been launched and steered upon his course by the unobtrusive skill of his neighbor at table, who listens with apparent delight as he details the exploits of his lifelong hero:—

"I said, 'Stand up; tell your story.' He did. I said, 'Sit down. Now tell yours.' She did. I said, 'You were right; he was wrong,' " and so on.

Such people are doomed to starvation, psychologists declare. They merely recite their little *Odyssey* until they are exhausted, and when rested up recite it over again, never giving themselves any chance to take in new ideas. It is perhaps comforting to reflect upon this righteous law of conversational compensations; and yet it is too often we rather than they who suffer the direct effects of their famine.

III

I am not exactly a hermit. To me the most interesting thing about this world through which I am passing is the people who live in it. They are also the most amusing thing

in it. This is the heart of humanism—the world of personality over against the material world. The latter sometimes seems to engross us, and it is heresy to depreciate it. But, vast as it is, I sometimes wonder if it is any more stupendous than a great man's idea of it. Wonderful as it is, is it any more wonderful than that he can form and carry in his mind an image, however imperfect, of it? Yet he is but one of millions, every one of whom forms and carries such an image, material, social, moral, economic. Every person carries a world about with him of his own creation or, at least, discovery. None of these images is wholly true, yet every one of them possesses some truth. No two of them are alike; perhaps no two of them should be alike. They are of an inexhaustible variety, of attitude, opinion, information. It is a mistake to suppose that only the intelligent have definite opinions; the most definite opinions are held by the unintelligent, and they also hold them most strongly.

It is this that literature seeks to mirror, catching perhaps a hundred-millionth part, the best or worst, and "reducing it to writing," as we rightly say—for how much it is reduced! Which is what gives to literature such interest and glory as it possesses. But the thing itself is vastly greater than any record or even experience—not to say fancy—of it.

You see a man coming up the street, a person perhaps of little social, political, or financial standing. None the less, he carries about with him a private individual universe, as definite as your own, and in some parts, at least, sounder than yours. In it he alone is judge; his estimates and opinions prevail. You yourself are to him but a part of it, and subject to his verdicts and appraisals. If he is informed, capable, and wise, his ideas will be sounder; but many an

ignorant and prejudiced person, if he be reflective and kind, carries about a universe well worth knowing.

Everybody is, in short, a kind of peripatetic Atlas* bearing a world upon his shoulders. More than a world—a universe. It is no great flight of fancy to imagine the city streets filled with people so occupied. Yet most of them give no sign of finding the task burdensome. They are more like people carrying balloons. This is certainly a better figure, for if some are weighed down with the weight of their universe, others are plainly buoyed up by theirs. These balloons are of very different sizes, so that while one is hardly visible, another fills the whole sky. But, you will say, this means endless collisions between rival universes. And of course that is precisely what is constantly taking place, unless one knows how to handle his private universe with good taste and good manners. It is like the conflict of umbrellas on a crowded street on a rainy day, only on a much grander and more serious scale. The balloons are also of very different densities, and of different colors—black, blue, gray, brown, rose, yellow, purple, and orange. Every one is very sensitive about his own particular one; nobody likes to have any liberties taken with his universe. And how fortunate it is that they are really or nearly invisible! Otherwise we should all be too often and too palpably outshone.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

Have you ever seen the advertisements of books that, according to the publisher, will make you the centre of any social

*Atlas, in classic mythology, was a giant who carried the world upon his shoulders.

group? There is usually a picture to add conviction: sometimes it shows a young man easily persuading a board of directors twice his age; sometimes the hero is in evening dress, and a group of fashionable people listen as if enchanted to his sparkling conversation. These advertisements are always addressed to men; apparently girls do not need to learn the art of fluent and fascinating speech. From such advertisements Doctor Goodspeed draws the theme of this essay; it is really a discourse on the art of conversation.

What touches of humor do you find in the essay?

What is Doctor Goodspeed's theory about conversation? (See page 130.) Is this the theory held by most people? Is it your theory?

In the final paragraph, what is meant by the statement that we carry balloons with us?

What new ideas have you gained from this essay?

What characteristics of the author can you infer from the essay?

Words worth looking up are: meretricious, prandial, gastronomically, omniscient, pabulum, peripatetic.

This essay contains many sentences that provoke thought. The following may serve either for class discussion or as essay-starters:

"It is evident from this literature that one must shine to be happy."

"We all know the conversational superman."

"To me the most interesting thing about this world through which I am passing is the people who live in it."

"Every person carries about with him a world of his own creation."

"Nobody likes to have any liberties taken with his universe."

THEME WRITING

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

Dorothy Canfield Fisher was born at Lawrence, Kan., the daughter of President Canfield of Kansas University. Her father later became president of Ohio State University, and here Dorothy took her college course, later doing graduate study at Columbia. She married John L. Fisher, who had been captain of the Columbia football team. Their home is in Arlington, Vt., though they have spent much time in Europe. The winter of 1911–12 was spent in Rome, where Mrs. Fisher studied the methods of Madame Montessori, famous for her work in teaching children, and wrote a book called *A Montessori Mother.*

During the World War both she and her husband were in active work in France, he with the Ambulance Corps, she as a war-relief worker. Her first task was to help the soldiers blinded in battle. She edited a magazine for them, got books written for them, and herself helped to print them in the raised type that the blind use. Later she helped care for the children in the evacuated parts of France, establishing a Red Cross hospital to care for them. Out of her French experiences came a book of short stories, *Home Fires in France,* which is one of the best delineations in fiction of the French people. She has also written several novels, *The Brimming Cup* and *The Bent Twig,* and two books of short stories, *Hillsboro People* and *The Real Motive.* She translated from the Italian a *Life of Christ,* written by Papini. *Understood Betsy* is a book for children, and a great favorite with them. Readers of high-school age will enjoy *Home Fires in France* and *Hillsboro People*—the latter book dealing with New England rural life.

THEME WRITING*

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

Scientists tell us it is harder to start a stone moving than to keep it going after it gets started. And every writer can bear witness that the most unyielding stone is mobile as thistle-down compared to the inertia of the average human mind confronted with a blank sheet of paper.

It is hard to write. It is infinitely harder to begin to write. Don't I know it? I have been earning my living by my pen for twenty-five years. I shouldn't like to guess how many hundred thousand words I've put on paper, and I have never in my life sat down at my desk and started off without hesitation, repugnance and wild flounderings. Other authors confess that it is much the same with them. There are exceptions—stories, even novels, where the opening words pop right into one's mind part of the first conception, but these inspirations are far between.

I set down all this not to discourage those of you who are wondering if perhaps it might not be possible to become an author, still less to add to the gloom of wrestling with the English compositions you all have to write. On the contrary, I hope to encourage you by letting you know that those hopeless moments of inhibition before the blank page, those chewed balky pen holders are only the common lot. There is nothing the matter if you can't start writing without effort. Nobody can.

*From *Current Literature*, of which Dorothy Canfield Fisher is a contributing editor. Copyrighted by American Education Press.

But perhaps this sounds a little bit like the fortune teller who predicted, "You will have forty years of bad luck and then—then you will be used to it." It is not as bad as that. It is quite true that no one ever learns to write both well and easily. But there are tricks to every trade and some of the most useful of them all are ways of tricking your own rebellious nerves. Perhaps it would help you to know of one that works with most writers. Whenever they have a piece of writing to do, *they begin to write*—to write something, anything. They conquer the inertia of their minds by a spasm of effort, just as a man might give a great heave to a boulder that blocks his way. Grimly, doggedly, they keep on writing. Often what they are setting down is flat, stale balderdash, and they know it. No matter! If they are experienced writers they keep right on, do not stop—not to sharpen a pencil, or get a drink of water, or go to look out of the window, although they yearn to do all these things. They have learned by experience that if they sit and stare at the paper they are lost. The rosy, hazy half-thoughts which flit about the back of the mind always vanish when one tries to think them out. The only way to catch them is to put down on the paper as many of them as possible.

So the struggling author plods ahead, filling page after page with horrible, unwieldy sentences, haphazard, unleavened ideas, and after a time it begins to move more smoothly. Is it because of habit, or because the subconscious mind wakes up, or is it something similar to physical momentum? Nobody knows, but it almost always works. The great boulder begins to roll evenly and more and more in the desired direction. Apter phrases suggest themselves. The whole subject begins to take on shape. Even now it is

not good. But there is something there, some stuff which can later be licked into shape. Then comes the moment when the writer realizes that he has really said somehow all that was in his mind.

The work is far from being finished, but the hardest part is over. Now comes the mechanical task of breaking up ungainly sentences, cutting out the flat words and phrases, thinking up colorful ones to fill the gaps, shifting related ideas into paragraphs. It is a matter of skill and judgment, only a little harder than correcting grammatical errors—far different from the agony of trying to create, or rather to drag out the raw material from the fringe of consciousness.

It is mechanical work but very necessary. Inexperienced writers don't do enough of it. Very young writers often do not revise at all. Like a hen looking at a chalk line, they are hypnotized by what they have written. "How can it be altered?" they think. "That's the way it was written." Well, it has to be altered. You have to learn how. That is chiefly what English classes can teach you. They can't give you thoughts and material to write about. Only your inherited brain cells and the enriching experience of life as you live it can do that. But you can learn to put what material you have into form. In manual training you wouldn't hand in a lot of sticks and boards bunched together with string, and call it a table. It's no better to hand in a detached bundle of statements, starting nowhere in particular, trailing along a while and then fading out—and call it a theme.

All your first drafts will need revision, but the middle and end of them may not need a great deal. You had steam up when you wrote them; you were commencing to feel what you wanted to say. But *watch your beginning*. That

was written when arm and brain were cold. Try as you may to put it into shape, the first page or so is generally hopeless. Then cut it out and begin where the real life begins. You may hate to sacrifice that laboriously written first page, but if it isn't right, can't be made right, it isn't worth keeping. When you wrote it you were only warming up your arm. Do that behind the grand stand, and when you start the game be ready to pitch real ball.

Editor's Note: With this article should be read the following paper by Dorothy Canfield Fisher in which she tells how she wrote one of her stories, *Flint and Fire*. She relates how the idea first came to her, how she thought about the characters, and the plot, and the place, until the whole story was clear in her mind. She continues:

The story was now ready to write.

I drew a long breath of mingled anticipation and apprehension, somewhat as you do when you stand, breathing quickly, balanced on your skis, at the top of a long white slope you are not sure you are clever enough to manage. Sitting down at my desk one morning, I "pushed off" and with a tingle of not altogether pleasurable excitement and alarm, felt myself "going." I "went" almost as precipitately as skis go down a long white slope, scribbling as rapidly as my pencil could go, indicating whole words with a dash and a jiggle, filling page after page with scrawls . . . it seemed to me that I had been at work perhaps half an hour, when some one was calling me impatiently to lunch. I had been writing four hours without stopping. My cheeks were flaming, my feet were cold, my lips parched. It was high time some one called me to lunch.

The next morning, back at the desk, I looked over what I had written, conquered the usual sick qualms of discouragement at finding it so infinitely flat and insipid compared to what I had wished to make it, and with a very clear idea of what remained to be done, plodded ahead doggedly, and finished the first draft before noon. It was almost twice too long.

After this came a period of steady desk work, every morning, of rewriting, compression, more compression, and the more or less mechanical work of technical revision, what a member of my family calls "cutting out the 'whiches.'" The first thing to do each morning was to read a part of it over aloud, sentence by sentence, to try to catch clumsy, ungraceful phrases. . . . Always interwoven with these mechanical revisions were recurrent intense visualizations of the scenes. This is the mental trick which can be learned, I think, by practice and effort. Personally, although I never used as material any events in my own intimate life, I can write nothing if I cannot achieve these very definite, very complete visualizations of the scenes; which means that I can write nothing at all about places, people or phases of life which I do not intimately know, down to the last detail. If my life depended on it, it does not seem to me I could possibly write a story about Siberian hunters or East-side factory hands without having lived long among them.

Now the story was what one calls "finished," and I made a clear copy, picking my way with difficulty among the alterations, the scratched-out passages, and the cued-in paragraphs, the inserted pages, the rearranged phrases. As I typed, the interest and pleasure in the story lasted just

through that process. But on taking up the legible typed copy and beginning to glance rapidly over it, I felt fall over me the black shadow of that intolerable reaction which is enough to make any author abjure his calling forever. By the time I had reached the end, the full misery was there, the heart-sick, helpless consciousness of failure. . . .

From the subconscious depths of long experience came up the cynical, slightly contemptuous consolation, "You know this never lasts. You always throw this same fit, and get over it."

So, suffering from really acute humiliation and unhappiness, I went out hastily to weed a flower-bed.

And sure enough, the next morning, after a long night's sleep, I felt quite rested, calm, and blessedly matter-of-fact. *Flint and Fire* seemed already very far away and vague, and the question of whether it was good or bad, not very important or interesting, like the chart of your temperature in a fever now gone by.*

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

Dorothy Canfield Fisher is well qualified to tell you how to write themes. First, she wrote them herself as a schoolgirl; then she studied the art of writing in college and university, and helped with a textbook on composition; then she became a teacher, and finally a writer of essays, novels, short stories. Surely out of this experience she can advise you.

In the first article, what does the author say about starting to write? What is meant by "moments of inhibition"?

What does she say is the best way to get going? What is the rule once you are started?

*From *Americans All*, edited by Benjamin A. Heydrick, copyrighted by Harcourt Brace and Company.

What is the next step, after the ideas are all down on paper? Note that even experienced writers have to go through this procedure.

What part of the composition does she say deserves special attention? What does she advise?

What parts of this essay seem to you particularly helpful?

In the second article, what do you learn about her own method of writing?

What work was to be done after the first writing of the story?

What is meant by "visualizing the scene"?

How did the author feel after the story was all finished and typed? How did she get over this feeling? Was it usual?

Words worth learning: inhibition, abjure, balderdash.

In connection with the essay, it would be interesting to read Robert Louis Stevenson's "A College Magazine," in the volume *Memories and Portraits.* In this Stevenson tells how he learned to write. Another essay that is valuable to one who is interested in the art of writing is *Self-Cultivation in English,* by George H. Palmer.

A DOG IN THE HOUSE

BURGES JOHNSON

BURGES JOHNSON

Burges Johnson was born in Rutland, Vt., in 1877, and, like so many good Vermonters, moved outside the state in early youth, taking his parents with him. He attended schools in New London, Connecticut, and Chicago, where his clergyman father had successive parishes, and entered Amherst College, graduating in 1899.

He found reportorial jobs on afternoon newspapers in New York, working for *The Evening Post* among others; then he entered the magazine and publishing field, filling editorial positions successively at Putnam's, Harper's, and on *Everybody's Magazine,* then served as managing editor of *Outing* and editor-in-chief of *Judge,* the humorous weekly. An opportunity to direct the fortunes of a small publishing house led him into educational publishing. His business was purchased by E. P. Dutton and Company, and he became their educational adviser. Later he established a part-time relationship to Vassar College, teaching certain courses and directing publications. Within ten years he was giving all his time to teaching and executive tasks. Mr. Johnson went to Syracuse University in 1927. Here he holds the positions of director of public relations, professor of English, and adviser to university publications.

He has continued with such outside writings as his professional duties permitted, serving as editor of *The Author's League Bulletin* for several years, and he is now a department editor of *The North American Review.* Since graduating from college he has been a contributor of verse and prose, essays and stories to magazines. Several volumes of verse have been published, of which *Bashful Ballads* is the best known. He has written two volumes of essays—*The Well of English and the Bucket* and *As I Was Saying.* The essay here given is from the latter book. He has received the degree of Doctor of Letters from Amherst, but he prefers "Mr." as a handle to his name. He is a member of the Players and the Dutch-Treat clubs in New York. He married, in 1904, Constance, daughter of Honorable Everett P. Wheeler.

A DOG IN THE HOUSE*

BURGES JOHNSON

WHEN does a house, slowly emerging from a chaos of lumber, bricks, and mortar, and taking on form and substance, cease to be merely a house and become a home? Surely before it is finished; no house which is the dwelling place of its owners is ever finished. Like the corporeal city of New York, each piece of furniture is on trial, each bit of carpet may be torn up to make way for a successor more in keeping with the owner's present state of prosperity. A woman is the centre of the home, to be sure. She is the true home-maker. But it is not Home solely because she is there. Several elements are needed which she welds into one unified whole. Strangely incongruous elements they may be —books; worn furniture, worn in such ways as to prove that it has contributed to comfort, and not merely to appearances; bits of handiwork here and there, embroidery or patches or what you will. Battered toys are a satisfactory element: I do not hold with those household efficiency experts who believe that a child's toy should never be discovered outside of the nursery. Children should be directed to keep their belongings within the nursery, to be sure, but the visitor gains at once a certain feeling of confidence in the homeliness of that home where he stumbles upon a wee fire engine across the doorway or sits upon a crippled doll in the parlor arm-chair.

Pets are an important element. How perfectly a weather-

*From *As I Was Saying*, by Burges Johnson, copyrighted by The Macmillan Company.

beaten rabbit or a tortoise trailing its broken tether work into the picture! Mr. Noyes has written a poem describing the way in which Nature, with her weather stains, paints the ugly newness out of man-made things. In the same way the director of the home manages somehow to take this broken toy, that old chair, a kitten or two, and all the flotsam and jetsam of living, and piece them together into a more wonderful mosaic than all the arts of our modern civilization have been able to fabricate with other materials.

He seemed all legs, like a cuttle-fish, as I carried him in my arms to the nearest street-car.

"You can't bring a dog like that on here," said the conductor.

"But it's just a young little puppy," I protested.

"Little puppy your grandmother!" said the conductor irrelevantly, and rang his bell.

He would neither walk forward independently, nor be led. Whichever direction I essayed, he braced his feet and slid. I felt that his head, which waggled loosely upon his shoulders, would inevitably pull off, and disclose a long pasteboard neck, after the style of those Easter rabbits that are filled with candy; so I lifted him in my arms again, there in the crowded city streets, intensely conscious of an aroused public amusement as I struggled to re-enfold this or that hairy protruding tentacle.

Experience has taught me that there is no graceful method of carrying either a large puppy or a small boy struggling to be free. City blocks seemed to me that day to be miles in length and the baggage car of my suburban train was a haven of refuge, a flowery bed of ease. Yet al-

ways in my mind was the thought that there would be new struggles and humiliations at the final stage of my progress—from train to house. I found myself saying over and over, with all sorts of variations, "Water quench fire, fire burn stick, stick beat dog, for dog and I have *miles* and *miles* to go before we reach home!"

Up a certain new-made path I came, dragging my reluctant quadruped, his legs braced against me, his frowsy neck stretched to the danger point. On the porch, littered with the trash of building operations, stood the homemaker, waving a greeting. Behind her a temporary front door gaped hospitably open. An orchestra of saws and hammers played a rough welcoming chorus. Suddenly the taut chain in my hand grew slack. My sprawly captive wobbled past me, mounted the steps and sat down before the door, facing the path by which we had come. An unknown workman approached with a board upon his shoulder. Our drafted recruit arose to his full stilted height and barked his first warning of danger—barked with such tremulously eager violence that the effort tumbled him over; but behold, he had become a watch-pup, and this was Home!

In time the house stopped growing, at least in outward dimensions. Not so its guardian. He took on length and breadth, and visible cubits were added to his stature with every passing week. As he grew bigger he grew blacker, turning from a dusty nondescript rustiness to a glossy blackness from nose-tip to tail. The Hound of the Baskervilles was with us in the flesh, but not in the spirit. What his spirit was I find it hard to say. Put the soul of Puck into a clumsy container, modify it by an emotionally affec-

tionate temperament, and you have something approximating the truth.

I have never been wholly patient with those who generalize disparagingly about certain breeds of dog. "Fox-terriers," says a certain flat-dweller, "are irritable and snappy." "Collies," says another, "are dangerously temperamental."

Grant me a lively, impetuous disposition and then shut me in a superheated flat many hours of every day, and I will snap. Let me dress you in furs in warm weather and then urge you repeatedly to run and fetch a stick within a narrow yard—you will become dangerously temperamental. Some breeds of dog have certain natural environments. Out of those environments they are uncertain of themselves, often suspicious, and easily startled into regrettable action. Give a collie meadows to roam, sheep to herd, or, lacking sheep, a "gang" of wide-ranging small boys, and his own times for resting, and then you will have one of God's finest gifts to man, a trustworthy responsible dog. Give a fox-terrier earth for digging, small game or fellow pups for fighting, something to chew, something to chase, and he will be as faithful and alert a friend and servant as heart could wish.

Alas for the unhappy lot of many dogs! It is only the exceptional individual in any breed, more often among the bulls and terriers, that finds its natural environment in a city house and street; unless it be for those wee anomalies which Brother Irvin Cobb shockingly alludes to as "fur-bearing cockroaches"; and perhaps also for their first cousins who lack the fur and are ever shivering in consequence. But are they indeed dogs?

As for the dane, because I love the tribe so well I shall

speak with diffidence, hesitating at generalizations and holding close to one unmelancholy specimen, which, from puppyhood to elephantine adolescence, bumbled daily from bedroom to garden, from kitchen to attic, making the house and our hearts his own. Yet I am going to venture the following general assertions and then humbly await their destruction at the pen of some wiser caninologist. The dane is no more nearly related to a mastiff than he is to a St. Bernard. The greyhound is his nearest kin. Yet his blundering masters in past years, chiefly in this country, have bred him with thick legs and neck and heavy jowl. Having the heart of a greyhound in the body of a mastiff, he has been as uneasy of spirit as a collie in a city dwelling.

"It is faithful and trustworthy," says a certain encyclopædia, "and when first introduced into England was a favorite companion of both ladies and gentlemen; but when the order came into force commanding all dogs to be muzzled, this hound, having a will of its own, rebelled against being held in check, and being very strong, could not easily be kept under control, so had to be abandoned as a companion. It is now chiefly used as a show dog, but in the middle ages it was a sporting dog, and was employed to hunt the wild boar and chase the deer"—and so on, through many highly creditable paragraphs.

Let me hazard another generalization (observe how easily the didactic manner lays hold on one!). A dog possessing speed and strength relies naturally upon those traits in emergency. The instinct of a hunting dane is to hurl its weight upon the foe. Teeth as weapons are an afterthought. A great dane that readily snaps or bites is a dog with misdirected energies.

As for our guardian, he steadily grew in size and glossy blackness, in whimsical mischief, in *personality* and in devotion. The feeding was no serious matter. He ate everything. Two elements were to be considered in preparing the food—filling and nutrition; two parts filling to one part nutrition. Table scraps of every sort, even to fruit peelings, were grist for his mill. He was not an embarrassment in this regard—he was a useful institution.

An embarrassment he was in many ways. Demonstrations of affection from one hundred and twenty pounds of dog may be accepted in spirit, but in the flesh they were as the advances of an amiable earthquake. There would come a troubled look in his soulful brown eyes when his struggles for some inadequate resting place upon his mistress's lap went unrewarded; and he would insinuate himself into incredibly small spaces to find room upon a sofa beside any one of us.

Rebuffs touched him so deeply that they, too, were the cause of embarrassment. It was his immediate wish when rebuked to retire under something—the lower it was, the better. When his spirits returned, as they invariably did, and he arose to full height, forgetting first to crawl out, he was likely to leave the room with a small table or chair perched jauntily upon his back. Nosing under a rug was, on the other hand, a constant delight, and I picture him standing gravely before me with some gaudy Turkish garment that he himself had donned covering him from head to tail, his bright eyes gleaming up at me from under one end of it while the other end wagged heavily.

He had the ways of a terrier, and like a handsome boy who has grown over-tall, he seemed ever to be deploring his

size. Perhaps the safest generalization about a proper dane is to say that either he never realizes he is not a lapdog, or always regrets that he is not.

Some time ago an old friend whom I had not seen for several years accosted me in the street.

"Married?" he inquired, after other time-bridging questions.

"Yes."

"Any children?"

"Three. And you?" I added.

"Boy and girl—four and six." Then he looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, seized my lapel and drew me outside the current of traffic. "You tell me *one* story about your kids," he burst out, "and I'll tell you one about mine!"

Dog owners are like parents in this respect—on their tongue-tips hang accounts of precocious acts, or deeds displaying almost human intelligence, and the careless acquaintance may unwittingly touch some hair-trigger that discharges the whole narration upon him.

Are you not, gentle dog-owning reader, pursuing these very pages with a certain friendly impatience, your thoughts flitting back and forth from your dog to mine? Are you not quivering to interrupt at my first pause for breath, with a "How interesting!—But I must tell you about our Fido—you've no idea how bright he is."

I will gladly listen to your panegyric, when you have heard mine.

I will even love your dog with you—if he be a *real* dog —on your say-so. Ah me, how easy it is to come to love a dog! And when there is so much dog to love, his hold upon one's affection becomes very great. "No man is so poor,"

says Josh Billings, "but what he can own a dog, and I have known some so poor they owned three." I am poor enough to have owned several sizes of dog; but without disparagement of any lesser breed within the law I exhort you at one time or another in your lives, for your soul's good, to get to know a dane. I would have you watch this giant body with its heart of a child gravely stalking some small beetle through the grass. I would have you note his lofty condescension toward inimical small dogs—his eager playfulness with friendly ones who always enter into games with him in a spirit of fearful bravado, wagging their tails violently throughout, as an earnest that no chance act of theirs should be misunderstood.

I would have you see him dig—not merely to hide a bone, but for the fun of digging. A wonder to the neighborhood was the hole our black genie dug beneath an ancient tree-stump. Straight into the ground he would crawl—under and between the roots completely out of sight; emerging finally on the other side like some buried mammoth exhuming itself.

I would have you swim with him, for his speed and power and reserve strength in the water are joys to behold. Often have I, and others with me, held to a powerful black tail and trailing out almost flat on the water been drawn many yards to shore.

Though a dane be first cousin to a greyhound, his tail is surely younger brother to that of a kangaroo. It steers him, it balances him like a gyroscope, and when he would bring his great weight to a sudden stop, it goes round and round in swift revolutions like a reversed propeller on an airship. He is forever flailing it against some unfriendly corner and

bruising the tip; then—yes, I admit it to his disadvantage—he goes about slapping little blood marks against walls and whimpering in grieved surprise at each new pain.

Obviously there are disadvantages to a dane. Humbug though he be ofttimes, since he has the dignity and bearing of a panther timid strangers refuse to consider him a humbug. Well intentioned though he is, yet those growls that seem to emanate from some sub-basement of his physical structure are enough indication for many sceptic friends, who prefer not to trust to his intentions. He is not a wise investment for gregarious folk in a crowded neighborhood. And yet in my effort toward a dispassionate consideration I have gone too far. There are many facts on the other side of the scale. He will not fight with neighbors' dogs—he is too big. Little aggressors he bowls over with a blow of his shoulder. As a draft animal for the children who come to know him he is invaluable, and for the littlest he is better than a dozen hobby horses.

Yes, thou unbeliever, I grant that this is a picture of one particular dane, drawn from loving memory. I will believe your stories of this or that dangerous monster of a beast. But I have heard, too, of treacherous collies and even mad poodles; and on the other hand I have learned that there are many other danes like mine; I have learned of them on those pleasant idle occasions when I have happened upon one dane-owner or another, and stepping out of the stream of traffic for a moment have listened to one story about his dog and told him one about mine.

Humbug was a term I used a moment ago, and though it may be written with a smile, yet there are good grounds for it now and then. Since knowing and coming to love

the breed I have entered a kennel of strange danes, whose basso profundo growls and gnashing teeth seemed to welcome me to instant destruction. I have not, I assure you, the disposition of a lion tamer. It was simply that each stately head and lithe body seemed to be but a replica of my own dog-chum, clad for the moment perhaps in some other colored garment. And as I pushed through the gate I found myself swayed this way and that by struggling monsters who wished to have their heads scratched. Listen to this corroborative testimony from a friend. She visited her Adirondack camp after a long absence. Dane pups had been born and had grown to dog's estate since she had last inspected the property. She missed her guide and caretaker at the station, and went alone to the camp, where no one was on hand to greet her. Letting herself in at the front door she was startled by a chorus of blood-curdling growls, and found herself facing three full-grown danes on guard.

"I had heard it said," she told us in recounting the affair, "that one's only safety when at the mercy of fierce animals lies in calm and ordinary behavior. With my heart beating violently, I looked for some commonplace act to perform. Ashes had blown out from the fireplace over the floor. A broom stood handily by. The moment I reached for it those formidable beasts leaped, as one dog, out of the room. One of them went through an unopened window, taking the sash with him. It seems that the broom handle which I had touched was the utensil used by my guide for maintaining discipline among the dogs."

We miss our black familiar—miss his inquiring whine at the door of a morning, his companionship upon every sort of expedition, his petty sins and his contrition, his hum-

bugry, his enormous weeping for infinitesimal punishments. We miss him as a warm footstool beneath the table where he would lie patiently throughout meal time, happy to serve in that humble capacity. And if this be his individual picture, painted with the colors of prejudice, as a sort of memorial to a dead friend, yet I dare assert that here and there among my readers dane owners will cry out, "He might have meant our Bismarck, our Prince, our Osra, when he wrote that!"

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

Most of us remember a dog, a cat, or a rabbit that gave our childhood many happy hours. Nor does this joy in our animal friends decrease in later years. The companionship of a dog is surely the next thing to the companionship of people; indeed, one cynic is quoted as saying, "The more I see of people, the better I like dogs."

Observe how Burges Johnson leads up to his subject. The opening paragraph of the essay is on the topic of what makes a house a home; the second, on pets in general; then—just as a dog dashes into a room—the hero enters.

Do you think the essay begins well?

What did Irvin Cobb mean by "fur-bearing cockroaches"?

Is Mr. Johnson a lover of dogs in general, or only of his particular dog?

Why, according to the author of this essay, are some dogs wrongly accused of being irritable?

What were some of the odd ways of this great dane?

What are the characteristics of dogs of this kind?

Words that will repay looking up: adolescence, flotsam and jetsam, gregarious, inimical, panegyric.

Reading Burges Johnson's essay may start you to writing. Here are some possible essay subjects:

My Dog Friend.
Dogs I Don't Like.
A True Dog Story.
Some of My Pets.
Other People's Pets.
When Our Dog Was Lost.

Many writers have paid tribute to their dogs. Rudyard Kipling says:

> Buy a pup, and your money will buy
> Love unflinching that cannot die,—
> Perfect passion and worship fed
> By a kick in the ribs or a pat on the head.
> —*The Power of the Dog.*

Many stories have been written about dogs. One of the best is a short story, *Rab and His Friends,* by Doctor John Brown. Then there is *Bob, Son of Battle,* by Alfred Ollivant, and *Lad, a Dog,* by Albert Payson Terhune. These are both novels.

For essays on dogs, there is "Gissing," in Christopher Morley's *Plum Pudding;* "Dogs and Men," by H. C. Merwin, in *Atlantic Classics,* and "Some Nonsense About a Dog," by Harry Esty Dounce, in Morley's *Modern Essays.*

"IS THERE ANY MAIL?"

FRANCES LESTER WARNER

FRANCES LESTER WARNER

Frances Lester Warner was born in Putnam, Conn. After her graduation from Mt. Holyoke College, she taught English in the Newton (Mass.) high school, and later at Mt. Holyoke and at Wellesley. She married Mayo D. Hersey, and now lives in Washington, D. C.

She is a frequent contributor to magazines, and her essays have been collected into the following books: *Endicott and I, Pilgrim Trails, Life's Minor Collisions, Groups and Couples, Steel and Holly,* and *Surprising the Family.*

In reply to a letter asking for some information about herself, she wrote as follows:

"The letter-writing family described in the essay was my own, with sidelights provided by my husband's family as well. The various branches of the two families are so scattered that letter-writing has become something of a regular ritual, and we write sometimes what we call 'syndicate letters,' carbon copies of which go from Washington to Denver, and Massachusetts and Connecticut, and to hay-fever sufferers in the Maritime Provinces, when any special news has to be shared with all the clan. But in our early days in Connecticut the receiving of mail was the chief ritual, and our younger brother used to be sent to the post office every evening to see if there was anything in the family box. One time during my first college vacation, our brother knew that my sister and I had been sending our writings to magazines, and getting them back with rejection slips. But one evening there was a letter in our box for my sister, from an editor. Our brother was only a high-school freshman at the time, but he knew enough to judge that it was not a returned manuscript. So he very skilfully pried the envelope open, took out the letter and the check, stored them carefully in his pocket, and put a sentimental picture post-card into the envelope instead. Then he sealed it up, presented the envelope to us, and sat back to enjoy the scene. We fell on the letter

with rapture, for it was the first thing looking like an acceptance that either of us had had. After we had used up the complete vocabulary of astonishment on the post-card (the magazine in question was one of the most dignified in the world) our brother handed over the acceptance and the check. This story is not intended to give younger brothers any more ideas for the training of their sisters than they can think up for themselves.

"I am sorry that my 'life' isn't more spectacular. I used to teach in college; my hobbies are described in a piece I wrote once—'In Praise of Cooking'; I have learned to swim at last, but not to do the crawl, and the human beings I admire most are the human beings who *can* do it; I have married a scientist who specializes in the Bureau of Standards on Physics, a subject I nearly flunked in High School; and aside from these things I have no human merits. Amen!"

"IS THERE ANY MAIL?"*

FRANCES LESTER WARNER

If you would know how much the human race perennially wants to get a letter, be its postman when you can. You need not be officially appointed by the civil service, nor yet officiously appointed by yourself. For in the normal course of events in a busy life, if you are light of foot and lucky, the chance will naturally come.

Casting back over a varied career as informal letter-carrier myself, I recall most vividly two of my favorite routes. One was urban, one was rural, and it would be hard to tell which of these parishes was more eager for its mail.

My urban route led over the staircases of a beetling apartment building in one of the tallest and most overstuffed cities in the world—this in the days before elevators were in such common use as now. I lived that year within the summit of the highest crag, and at the postman's early morning bell, down along the zigzag stairways I would spin. And as I went, doors would open along those high impersonal halls, and faces would look out, and pleasant voices would call after me the magic words of the unofficial postman's license to perform: "If you are going down anyway, will you please bring mine?"

Eugene Field, it is said, used to get acquainted with his city neighbors by dropping into their flats without notice and requesting a bit of pie. My method, I must admit, was

*From *Surprising the Family*, by Frances Lester Warner, copyrighted, Houghton Mifflin Co.

less convivial, but it was pleasant in its way. It was well worth the trouble of peeling out the letters from behind those tight-fitting metal mail-box doors, purely for the pleasure of seeing, on my way back, the expressions of that highly conventionalized population come to life. Anticipating a letter, the human soul peeps out.

Once and forever I learned, that year, that it is not sheer bulk of correspondence, but The Particular Letter, that we want. There was, for instance, a certain beautiful dowager-duchess type of lady who counted that week lost when there was no letter from her son. Not that I ever scrutinized the envelopes in my charge, but as time went on I could not help learning to recognize the penmanship of that young man. And if the eighth day went by with handfuls of letters for this lady, yet not one addressed in the unmistakable square-cut fist, I felt at fault. On a grander scale, but similarly, I suppose the Angel Gabriel feels regretful when somewhere on his cosmic rounds he finds that he has among his messages no answer to a prayer.

At least, I never got over the feeling of triumph when I saw that I had fetched the one and only letter to my clients, nor the sensation that I should really have done something about it when I did not. If there was nothing for one of my patrons except a paltry advertising card, I felt apologetic when I doled it out, remembering James Barrie's famous postman of the glen, "whose bitter topic was the unreasonableness of humanity, which treated him graciously when he had a letter for it, but scowled at him when he had none, 'aye implying that I hae a letter, but keep it back.'"

My favorite rural route was on an island far out in the

Bay of Fundy, where the wee postoffice flew the flag of the British, and all the stamps bore the image of good King George. The mail-boat arrived three times in the week, and, at the proper interval after "she blew," every fisherman's house on the island had its courier at "North Head," waiting for the letters to be put out. My sister and I, by virtue of our pleasure in walking, were the delegates from the tiny seaside inn. The boat usually came in toward twilight, and we would hurry down and take our places in the waiting-line, which, like the rush-queue at the Boston Symphony, would stretch far out of the box-office door and go curving down along the road.

When our turn at the window came at last, one of us would seize the letters, the other the accumulated newspapers of three days, and we would go posting back, past the boat-landing, past the Customs 'Us, past the long-stemmed wharfs perched spindling up fantastically far above the water at Fundy's lowest tide. We never loitered to sort the mail in the half-darkness, for we knew our friends were perishing. Up along the narrow road between fishermen's gardens filled with sweetpeas and monk's-hood and shadowy poppies we would sprint, until we reached the little inn on the ledge near the harbor light. And there our friends would rush from all directions to greet us, by virtue of the cargo that we had. We always gave it to our leading lady, or to the leading man, to sort it out under the lamp, and they would toss it rapidly into piles, like bridge-fiends dealing cards. We were a civilized group—no snatching, no pouncing—but with our souls popping out of our eyes we stood intent. Two or three days of famine between mails whets the appetite. I think that with

us that summer it mattered less what particular letters we got on any particular day. We still had our preferences, but we were starving. Anything, anything, made out of ink and paper with an actual flapped envelope to it was plenty good enough for us.

Probably at the opposite pole from this extreme there is such a thing as being spoiled by too much and too frequent mail. The man of affairs who has to answer a bushel of it three times a day may conceivably lose the thrill; but even he draws a distinction between his inside pocket and his files.

In a certain public-spirited household where each member has quantities of miscellaneous mail, it is the custom for the tribe to flock from all quarters at the postman's ring. The one who first reaches the door assorts the letters, and as he hands them around the others ask him quaintly, "*Was* there anything?" to which he perhaps replies morosely, still parcelling it out in bulk, "No, not a thing." To a guest this sounds like sarcasm, or like a reflection on the value of individual friends. But, to the initiated, it simply means that on this particular morning there happens to be no letter from the member of the family who is away from home. And when that looked-for family letter does come, the rest of the mail remains unsorted, every one perches to listen on the stairs; if any one is still wandering about the house at large the rest shout to him, "There *was* something!"—and to the entire avid congregation the letter is read aloud. If a far-away member of that clan wishes to write anything in confidence to his mother, he encloses it under the flap of the envelope in a little secret note. He knows that an actual letter from him coming into the

house of an early morning and not to be shared with all would be too much of a tax on the curiosity of his kin. For until his letter arrives, the family will consider that there has been positively "nothing" in the mail.

Some such emphasis upon home-letters is characteristic of every united house. When my brother Geoffrey, at the age of nine, was spending a few weeks at a summer camp for boys, he wrote a letter to our mother which she has held up to us ever since as a model of correspondence for absent sons and daughters who are too busy to write long letters home. Geoffrey, in those days, was at the height of the caveman stage, and he felt that his parents would be relieved if in any way he rose above the average in things genteel. His letter ran:

DEAR MOTHER,

It is a pleasant day. I am all rite. I hope you are all rite.

Tell papa I do not eat with my knife.

I would like you to send me some more cash, if you are not busted yourself.

With love

G.

Within this modest compass, our mother pointed out, three virtues of a filial letter are achieved. In the first place, in order to mail it, the writer must have been at least alive "at even date"; he had not been poisoned by camp-cooking, or pinned under a capsized canoe. If he could write the letter at all, he must be feeling pretty much "all rite." In the second place, it was gratifying to learn that in resisting complete collapse into the savage state he was making every effort to keep up the family pride. And in the third

place, there was remarkable insight in that proviso which Geoffrey thoughtfully appended to his appeal for funds.

In the years that have passed since the arrival of that missive, our mother has often had occasion to assure us that we need not wait until we have time to write a long letter, or what we consider a "good" letter, before sending some message home. This business of putting off the act of writing until one has time to do the matter justice is the cause of prolonged lapses and temporary blockade. A good letter waiting to be written puts an effectual embargo on casual notes that might otherwise go forward without delay; and the longer the long letter waits, the more the material for it multiplies, until the human reason staggers in contemplation of the task. Over and over, our mother has explained to us that the veriest scrap torn from a memorandum pad arriving *on time* is worlds better than the painstaking work of art which arrives ten days late.

She impressed this upon Geoffrey so strongly in his student days that, when hard pressed for time, he would drop into the post-office, buy several post-cards, and write his home-letter upon them, going smoothly from one card to the next without a break. The only flaw in this arrangement was the little circumstance that very often the cards, though mailed all at once, would be delivered at different times. Sometimes the middle of his letter would arrive first, a card without beginning and without end, which, like all good serials, would break off in the midst of its most interesting part, the conclusion of which would arrive by some later post.

Our parents were so glad of any word of any kind that they did not mind waiting over a mail or two to patch the

letter up. But our sister Barbara disapproved the method, and planned revenge. She bought two post-cards of her own, and started a letter to Geoffrey, in which she reported some remarks that several girls had made to her about him in his absence. She carefully timed her material so as to reach the end of the first card just as she mentioned the name of the only girl whose opinion of him would disturb him much: "Then this noon," the first card concluded, "I saw Priscilla on the street, and she—" Here ended the card. Obviously the sentence would be continued on the next. Barbara posted the first instalment at once, retaining card number two for mailing on the following day. She estimated that this would give our brother at least twenty-four good hours to watch for the postman and to worry about what Priscilla might have said. Finally Barbara posted the second card, the top line of which went on, "did not happen to see me, as I was going into the bank and she was just taking a car."

If our mother had known about this plan in time, Barbara's post-cards would never have been sent, for she could not have allowed us to disarrange Geoffrey's writing habits in any way. She had been at too great pains to teach him that any word from him was welcome—no method too patchy or informal, no detail too trivial, no generality too flat to afford unfailing interest to relatives left at home.

Knowing my mother's ideas on this subject, and knowing how well I liked to hear minor details myself, I used to fill my letters home with all those odds and ends of fact that go to make up what psychologists not too admiringly name "total recall." Geoffrey, to whom my letters were always forwarded, used to be immensely tickled by the style

of document that the family considered "one of Margaret's best." On one occasion he resolved to emulate the manner, and wrote a masterpiece which he sent home on condition that it should not be forwarded to me. His effort was dated at the campus library, and it began, "When we came down to breakfast this morning, we found a rasher of bacon neatly served on a crockery plate, a knife, fork, and spoon at each cover, coffee served in a white cup with saucer to match, with or without sugar and top-milk. After breakfast I walked with Spider Babcock up to the Hill, along Cosine Avenue, and arrived at my class in descriptive geometry, wearing my dark blue serge with the hair-line stripe, my navy-blue tie with the black sprig, and my gray socks with the neat darn in the centre of the foot."

The letter went on to tell just what Spider Babcock said in class to Piggy Robbins, and what Piggy then replied, and how they all prospered in the subsequent appointments of the day, all as nearly as possible in my own conscientious vein. He expected a storm of derision from the family, and he got it from Barbara, who replied at once in kind. But our mother assured him that of all his letters this was the one that gave her the most animated notion of his academic day.

As a family scatters and grows older, it becomes more and more difficult to decide which letters shall be forwarded to the other members away from home. Sometimes in the most confidential clan one may wish to write a letter that will not bear circulation among all the brothers and sisters and all of the in-laws. Geoffrey and Priscilla, after their marriage, hit upon a simple device. If a letter of theirs was to be shown to the whole family connection, they

marked it, "P.R.S.V.P." This, Geoffrey explained, meant, "Pass 'round, s'il vous plaît." Documents of a more incriminating or special nature were marked *"Don't* P.R.S.V.P!" with now and then a dado of skulls and crossbones to make the meaning clear. Some such device as this should be adopted by great men, to indicate which of their letters should and which should not be printed in their *Lives.* If only Jane Welsh Carlyle had marked her most neuralgic letters "Don't P.R.S.V.P.," Froude might possibly have stayed his hand.

With the branching off of new families, there arises another question. How fully shall one share with the parent-stock the news of untoward happenings and anxious times? There is a canny shrewdness in the old saying, "What you don't know won't hurt you." This adage may apply to invalids and to those who are subject to hysteria or heart-failure; but for sound persons of lively imaginations and broad experience there is more truth in the reverse. Whatever they definitely know won't hurt them; it is uncertainty that kills. With their wits and their philosophy they have learned to cope with all tangible affairs. They cannot be stampeded by the actual. The thing that turns them gray before their time is the suspicion that they are being kept in the dark, considerately given only a partial knowledge of a situation, while letters become more and more non-committal and infrequent, lest the facts should "worry the family at home." An unexplained interval between letters of this kind is the eternal camping-ground for lawless fears. No actual emergency, no matter what a cataclysm, can compare with the conjuring powers of the experienced imagination not fully kept informed.

Shakespeare has given us many a model letter, but not one, I should say, more thorough-going than that letter of disaster in *The Merchant of Venice,* wherein the facts are so adequately set forth:

"Sweet Bassanio," writes Antonio, "my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit . . . it is impossible I should live." Receiving a letter that begins like this, at least you know the worst. Your mind is stirred up, to be sure, but you are not mystified. It is to some purpose that you can think. You may cut short your wedding-feast, empty out your coffers, instruct your servants, consult Bellario, and get you to the ferry which trades to Venice, with imagin'd speed. All this you may do for Antonio if you wish. But you need not shrivel your good nerve cells with wild and worried conjectures as to just how Antonio's business stands. You know.

And if the expert imagination is kept within bounds by complete and limiting facts in all calamitous affairs, it is proportionately stimulated by even the briefest items of good luck and happy circumstance. In the years when Geoffrey and Priscilla went to distant parts and made their home far from every one in the two tribes, Priscilla managed to spare time from her busy days to send bulletins about their little son. The items were scarcely more than a sentence long, but they were definite, especially in the days when he was very young. For instance, there was this kind of item about the first exquisite dawning of a baby's conscious mind: "He discovered his own hand this morning, and lay turning it to gaze at in the sun." Not a long or labored letter, but a heavenly gift for a daughter-in-law to

send to her mother-in-law, whose active imagination would instantly recreate in a flash all the sweetness of the moment —sunlight, first glimpses, attentive motherhood, the miracle of all sensitive eternal things—from that one delicate wisp of fact reconstructing the total charming scene.

But though short letters can be so adequate and such a source of fellowship and cheer, they are hard to write when we get to owing them. After a certain time has elapsed, we feel that nothing short of an Epistle to the Colossians will do. How shall we explain ourselves, we who have no explanation, and how shall we pick up the threads?

In my possession I cherish a sample of the grand manner in this line, the most disarming apology in the world for a protracted gap in correspondence. It was written by a white-haired fragile lady of the graceful old-time school, and she opened her letter with these words: "I know, my dear, how well you understand these inevitable, and inexcusable, delays."

The inevitable, and the inexcusable! How perfectly most letter-writers understand them, because they are the sins that most copiously we commit. Oh, those letters that we wish we had written (and a few we wish we hadn't)—omissions and commissions the very hint of which can make the actual heart go down in its socket with a thud! If only some wonderland, through-the-looking-glass King could stand under the Queen's rose-trees and mutter to us as to Alice and the gardeners, "You are all pardoned!"—how our circulations would pick up. And how we worship that friend who, forgiving all our iniquities, writes to us out of turn whenever he feels like it, as if nothing had gone amiss, thus breaking up the jam in our mental logging-stream!

Rupert Brooke was an expert at this, taking up an irregular correspondence without recapitulation, but with a swiftly managed impression that he is still remembering old times and gasping for details. For example, when homesick in Germany:

"I finish this tourist's effusion at 2 o' the morning, sitting up in bed, with my army blanket round me. My feet, infinitely disconnected, and southward, inform me that tonight it is freezing again. . . .

"Oh, I sometimes make a picture of Conduit Head, with Jacques in a corner, and Gwen on other cushions, and Justin on his back, and Ka on a footstool, and Francis smoking, and Frances in the chair to the right (facing the fire) . . . It stands out against the marble of the Luitpold Café and then fades. . . . But say it's true!

"Even with an enormous stomach and a beard and in Munich.—Yours, RUPERT."

Once and for all, such a note creates, both coming and going, the beloved human scene. One of the most winning moments in the letters of Ambassador Page is the passage where he assures his wife that he can hardly live through the seven and a half days that must elapse before he meets her in London—if it were seven and three quarters, he would have to hurry off right away and leave everything, and take a train.

Once upon a time, far out on a rugged New England coast-line, a group of us went down to "letter-box corner" to see if we had any mail. All the small mail-boxes were clustered there, surmounting their stout poles at different

heights and angles, like mushrooms on their stems. From a long distance away we could tell if there were letters, for each post-box was equipped with a brilliant red tin flag, which was set upright by the postman whenever he left letters in the box. On this particular evening our luck was running well, and all the little crimson flags were stuck aloft, like an uprising of the Reds. We fished out our letters and sat down at once to read them on a rocky slope beside the road. As we finished, we were joined by the Oldest Inhabitant of these regions, a hale and successful real-estate expert of eighty-three, who had watched all the summer cottagers move in, and had sold most of them their land. He drew some long business letters out of his box, and as he sat down on a boulder not far from us he said, not plaintively but in the tone of one who mentions a matter-of-fact idea, "I envy you your letters from your families. I can never get a letter from any one of my relatives again. I have to go to a medium for that."

"Do any very satisfactory messages ever come to you in that way?" some one asked.

"No," said he regretfully, "not what I should call very satisfactory. I suppose I am not mediumistic enough myself for that. But," he added thoughtfully, "I am sitting for development."

Sitting for development, at eighty-three—we meditated on this for a moment as we watched the slender horn of the new moon dip down beyond the bayberry pastures in the west. "I used to be a great sceptic about such things," mused the old gentleman at last, folding his business documents away, "and I still am, to a certain degree. But when all of your family and all of your friends of your own age

have gone, you don't *know* how you get to wishing for just a word."

No, probably we do not know, but we can quite sufficiently imagine, we whose relatives and friends are still going briskly hither and thither somewhere upon the planet Earth. Quick, Ariel, the ink-bottle! We have just time to get a short note written and into the evening mail!

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

In writing of familiar things with charm, with delicate humor, and with insight into human nature, few essayists of today surpass Frances Lester Warner. This essay is taken from the volume called *Surprising the Family*.

What touches of humor do you find in this essay?

What remarks show insight into human nature?

What does the author say about putting bad news into family letters? What other advice is given about letter-writing? Is it sound?

From this essay, can you form an idea what the writer's home life was like? What words would describe it?

Words worth adding to your vocabulary are: avid, cosmic, proviso, cataclysm.

Robert Louis Stevenson said that when he read anything he especially liked, he tried to write something in imitation of it. Here are some possible subjects:

What Makes a Good Letter?
Letter-Writing and Letter-Getting.
Waiting for the Postman.
A Letter I Never Sent.
The Letter I Expected, and the One I Got.
Letters of Famous People.

Another interesting essay on letter-writing is "On Unanswering Letters," by Christopher Morley, in the volume called *Forty-*

four Essays. And if you want to read some delightful letters, get either James Russell Lowell's *Letters* or those of Robert Louis Stevenson. Walter H. Page is mentioned in this essay; his *Life and Letters*, by Burton J. Hendrick, contains interesting letters written from England while he was our ambassador during the World War. Other good letters are those of Charles Lamb and of Thackeray. Then there are some good collections of letters by many authors, such as *The Gentlest Art* and *The Second Post*, both edited by E. V. Lucas. Other collections are: *Selected Letters*, edited by S. S. Center; *Letters from Many Pens*, edited by Margaret Coult; *Selected English Letters*, by C. M. Fuess, and *Familiar Letters*, by E. A. Greenlaw. For humor in letter form, read Wallace Irwin's *Letters of a Japanese Schoolboy*. Volumes containing letters will be found in the library under the numbers 816 and 826.

THE CHEERFUL BREAKFAST TABLE

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

Meredith Nicholson (1866–) was born at Crawfordsville, Ind., but has spent nearly all his life as a resident of Indianapolis. He attended public school in Indianapolis, and later went to Wabash College, though he did not graduate. Among his early friends were General Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur,* and James Whitcomb Riley, the poet. He began his own literary work by writing poetry, and at seventeen had the satisfaction of seeing a poem of his in print. He studied law, but never practised. Like many other young writers, he turned to journalism, and for ten years this absorbed all his time. Then he seriously set himself to the writing of fiction. After two fairly successful novels, he wrote *The House of a Thousand Candles,* a mystery story, which became the "best seller" of its time. This is his own account of how he wrote that book:

"The idea of laying a trap for the reader tickled me; and when once I had written the first chapter and outlined the last, I yielded myself to the story and bade it run its own course. I was never more honestly astonished in my life than to find my half-dozen characters taking matters into their own hands, and leaving me the merest spectator and reporter. I had made notes for the story, but in looking them over to-day, I find that I made practically no use of them. I never expect to experience again the delight of the winter I spent over that tale. The sight of white paper had no terrors for me. The hero, constantly cornered, had always in his pocket the key to his successive dilemmas; the heroine, misunderstood and misjudged, was struck at proper intervals by the spot-light that revealed her charm and re-established faith in her honorable motives. No other girl in my little gallery of heroines exerts upon me the spell of that young lady, who, on the day I began the story, as I waited for the ink to thaw in my workshop, passed under my window, by one of those kindly orderings of Providence that keep alive

the superstition of inspiration in the hearts of all fiction-writers. . . .

"I think I must have begun every morning's work with a grin on my face, for it was all fun, and I entered with zest into all the changes and chances of the story. I was embarrassed, not by any paucity of incident, but by my own fecundity and dexterity. The audacity of my project used sometimes to give me pause; it was almost too bold a thing to carry through; but my curiosity as to just how the ultimate goal would be reached kept my interest keyed high. . . .

"When I had completed the first draft, I began retouching. I liked my tale so much that I was reluctant to part with it; I enjoyed playing with it, and I think I rewrote the most of it three times. . . . I was interested chiefly in amusing myself, and I never troubled myself in the least as to whether any one else would care for the story. I was astonished by its sale, which exceeded a quarter of a million copies in this country; it has been translated into French, Italian, German, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian."*

Other successful novels of his were *The Port of Missing Men* and *The Hope of Happiness.* Always strongly loyal to his native state, he wrote a short history of it, called *The Hoosiers,* and a novel, *The Hoosier Chronicle.* He has published three volumes of essays, *The Provincial American, The Valley of Democracy,* and *The Man in the Street,* all of them characterized by vigor of style and a fine faith in America. Of his literary methods he gives us this hint in an interview: "When I write a novel, I give it the same care I give to an essay, which is to say that I keep on writing and rewriting until I feel that it is the best that I can do."

*From "Confessions of a Best Seller," an essay in *The Provincial American* (Houghton, Mifflin Company).

THE CHEERFUL BREAKFAST TABLE*

"A good, honest, wholesome, hungry breakfast."
—*The Compleat Angler.*

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

"One fine morning in the full London season, Major Arthur Pendennis came over from his lodgings, according to his custom, to breakfast at a certain club in Pall Mall, of which he was a chief ornament." This has always seemed to me the noblest possible opening for a tale. The zest of a fine morning in London, the deliberation of a gentleman taking his ease in his club and fortifying himself against the day's events with a satisfying breakfast, are communicated to the reader in a manner that at once inspires confidence and arouses the liveliest expectations. I shall not go the length of saying that all novels should begin with breakfast, but where the disclosures are to be of moment, and we are to be urged upon adventures calculated to tax our emotions or our staying powers, a breakfast table serves admirably as a point of departure. We thus begin the imaginary day where the natural day begins, and we form the acquaintance of the characters at an hour when human nature is most satisfactorily and profitably studied.

It is only a superstition that night alone affords the proper atmosphere for romance, and that the curtain must fall upon the first scene with the dead face of the king's messenger upturned to the moon and the landlord bawling from an upper window to know what it's all about. Morn-

*From *The Man in the Street*, copyright by Charles Scribner's Sons.

ing is the beginning of all things. Its hours breathe life and hope. "Pistols and coffee!" The phrase whets the appetite both for the encounter and the cheering cup. The duel, to be sure, is no longer in favor, and it is not for me to lament its passing; but I mention it as an affair of dewy mornings, indelibly associated with hours when the hand is steady and courage runs high.

It may be said with all assurance that breakfast has fallen into sad neglect, due to the haste and rush of modern life —the commuter's anxiety touching the 8.27, the city man's fear that he may not be able to absorb the day's news before his car is at the door. Breakfast has become a negligible item of the day's schedule. An increasing number of American citizens are unfit to be seen at the breakfast hour; and a man, woman, or child who cannot present a cheery countenance at breakfast is living an unhealthy life upon the brink of disaster. A hasty visit to the table, the gulping of coffee, the vicious snapping of teeth upon food scarcely looked at, and a wild rush to keep the first appointment noted on the calendar, is the poorest possible preparation for a day of honest work. The man who follows this practice is a terror to his business associates. Reports that "the boss isn't feeling well this morning" pass about the office, with a disturbance of the morale that does not make for the efficiency of the establishment. The wife who reaches the table dishevelled and fretful, under compulsion of her conscience, with the idea that the lord of the house should not be permitted to fare forth without her benediction, would do better to keep her bed. If the eggs are overdone or the coffee is cold and flavorless, her panicky entrance at the last moment will not save the situation. A growl from be-

hind the screening newspaper is a poor return for her wifely self-denial, but she deserves it. There is guilt upon her soul; if she had not insisted on taking the Smiths to supper after the theatre the night before, he would have got the amount of sleep essential to his well-being and the curtaining paper would not be camouflaging a face to which the good-by kiss at the front door is an affront, not a caress.

"Have the children come down yet?" the lone breakfaster growlingly demands. The maid replies indifferently that the children have severally and separately partaken of their porridge and departed. Her manner of imparting this information signifies rebellion against a system which makes necessary the repeated offering of breakfast to persons who accept only that they may complain of it. No happier is the matutinal meal in humbler establishments where the wife prepares and serves the food, and buttons up Susie's clothes or sews a button on Johnny's jacket while the kettle boils. If the husband met a bootlegger in the alley the previous night it is the wife's disagreeable duty to rouse him from his protracted slumbers; and if, when she has produced him at the table, he is displeased with the menu, his resentment, unchecked by those restraints presupposed of a higher culture, is manifested in the playful distribution of the tableware in the general direction of wife and offspring. The family cluster fearfully at the door as the head of the house, with surly resignation, departs for the scene of his daily servitude with the smoke of his pipe trailing behind him, animated by no love for the human race but only by a firm resolution not to lift his hand until the last echoes of the whistle have died away.

It is foreign to my purpose to indict a whole profession,

much less the medical fraternity, which is so sadly harassed by a generation of Americans who demand in pills and serums what its progenitors found in the plough handle and the axe, and yet I cannot refrain from laying at the doors of the doctors some burden of responsibility for the destruction of the breakfast table. The astute and diplomatic physician, perfectly aware that he is dealing with an outraged stomach and that the internal discomfort is due to overindulgence, is nevertheless anxious to impose the slightest tax upon the patient's self-denial. Breakfast, he reflects, is no great shakes anyhow, and he suggests that it be curtailed, or prescribes creamless coffee or offers some other hint equally banal. This is wholly satisfactory to Jones, who says with a sigh of relief that he never cared much for breakfast, and that he can very easily do without it.

About twenty-five years ago some one started a boom for the breakfastless day as conducive to longevity. I know persons who have clung stubbornly to this absurdity. The despicable habit contributes to domestic unsociability and is, I am convinced by my own experiments, detrimental to health. The chief business of the world is transacted in the morning hours, and I am reluctant to believe that it is most successfully done on empty stomachs. Fasting as a spiritual discipline is, of course, quite another thing; but fasting by a tired business man under medical compulsion can hardly be lifted to the plane of things spiritual. To delete breakfast from the day's programme is sheer cowardice, a confession of invalidism which is well calculated to reduce the powers of resistance. The man who begins the day with a proscription that sets him apart from his neighbors may venture into the open jauntily, persuading himself that his absti-

nence proves his superior qualities; but in his heart, to say nothing of his stomach, he knows that he has been guilty of a sneaking evasion. If he were a normal, healthy being, he would not be skulking out of the house breakfastless. Early rising, a prompt response to the breakfast-bell, a joyous breaking of the night's fast is a rite not to be despised in civilized homes.

Old age rises early and calls for breakfast and the day's news. Grandfather is entitled to his breakfast at any hour he demands it. He is at an age when every hour stolen from the night is fairly plucked from oblivion, and to offer him breakfast in bed as more convenient to the household, or with a well-meant intention of easing the day for him, is merely to wound his feelings. There is something finely appealing in the thought of a veteran campaigner in the army of life who doesn't wait for the bugle to sound reveille, but kindles his fire and eats his ration before his young comrades are awake.

The failure of breakfast, its growing ill repute and disfavor are not, however, wholly attributable to the imperfections of our social or economic system. There is no more reason why the homes of the humble should be illumined by a happy breakfast table than that the morning scene in abodes of comfort and luxury should express cheer and a confident faith in human destiny. Snobbishness must not enter into this matter of breakfast reform; rich and poor alike must be persuaded that the morning meal is deserving of all respect, that it is the first act of the day's drama, not to be performed in a slipshod fashion to spoil the rest of the play. It is the first chapter of a story, and every one who has dallied with the art of fiction knows that not

merely the first chapter but the first line must stir the reader's imagination.

It is a common complaint of retrospective elderly persons that the family life, as our grandparents knew it, has been destroyed by the haste and worry incident to modern conditions. Breakfast—a leisurely, jolly affair as I would have it, with every member of the household present on the stroke of the gong—is unequalled as a unifying force. The plea that everybody is in a hurry in the morning is no excuse; if there is any hour when haste is unprofitable it is that first morning hour.

A day should not be "jumped into," but approached tranquilly and with respect and enlivened by every element of joy that can be communicated to it. At noon we are in the midst of conflict; at nightfall we have won or lost battles; but in the morning "all is possible and all unknown." If we have slept like honest folk, and are not afraid of a dash of cold water, we meet the day blithely and with high expectation. If the day dawn brightly, there is good reason for sharing its promise with those who live under the same roof; if it be dark and rain beats upon the pane, even greater is the need of family communion, that every member may be strengthened for valiant wrestling with the day's tasks.

As against the tendency, so destructive of good health and mental and moral efficiency, to slight breakfast, the food manufacturers have set themselves with praiseworthy determination to preserve and dignify the meal. One has but to peruse the advertising pages of the periodicals to learn of the many tempting preparations that are offered to grace the breakfast table. The obtuse, inured to hasty snatches,

nibbles, and sips, are assisted to a proper appreciation of these preparations by the most enchanting illustrations. The art of publicity has spent itself lavishly to lure the world to an orderly and contemplative breakfast with an infinite variety of cereals that have been subjected to processes which make them a boon to mankind. When I hear of an addition to the long list, I fly at once to the grocer to obtain one of the crisp packages, and hurry home to deposit it with the cook for early experiment. The adventurous sense is roused not only by the seductive advertisement but by the neatness of the container, the ears of corn or the wheat sheaf so vividly depicted on the wrapper, or the contagious smile of a radiant child brandishing a spoon and demanding more.

Only a slouchy and unimaginative housewife will repeat monotonously a breakfast schedule. A wise rotation, a continual surprise in the food offered, does much to brighten the table. The damnable iteration of ham and eggs has cracked the pillars of many a happy home. There should be no ground for cavil; the various items should not only be well chosen, but each dish should be fashioned as for a feast of high ceremony. Gluttony is a grievous sin; breakfast, I repeat, should be a spiritual repast. If fruit is all that the soul craves, well enough; but let it be of paradisaical perfection. If coffee and a roll satisfy the stomach's craving, let the one be clear and not so bitter as to keep the imbiber's heart protesting all day, and the other hot enough to melt butter and of ethereal lightness. The egg is the most sinned against of all foods. It would seem that no one could or would wantonly ruin an egg, a thing so useful, so inoffensive; and yet the proper cooking of an egg is one of the

most difficult of all culinary arts. Millions of eggs are ruined every year in American kitchens. Better that the whole annual output should be cast into the sea than that one egg should offend the eye and the palate of the expectant breakfaster.

It grieves me to be obliged to confess that in hotels and on dining-cars, particularly west of Pittsburgh, many of my fellow citizens are weak before the temptation of hot cakes, drenched in syrup. I have visited homes where the griddle is an implement frequently invoked through the winter months, and I have at times, in my own house, met the buckwheat cake and the syrup jug and meekly fallen before their combined assault; but the sight of a man eating hot cakes on a flying train, after a night in a sleeper, fills me with a sense of desolation. Verily it is not alone the drama that the tired business man has brought to low estate!

Sausage and buckwheat cakes have never appealed to me as an inevitable combination like ham and eggs. Beefsteak and onions at the breakfast hour are only for those who expect to devote the remainder of the day to crime or woodchopping. The scent in itself is not the incense for rosy-fingered morn; and steak at breakfast, particularly in these times of perpendicular prices, speaks for vulgar display rather than generosity.

The history of breakfast, the many forms that it has known, the customs of various tribes and nations, assist little in any attempt to re-establish the meal in public confidence. Plato* may have done his loftiest thinking on an

*Plato was the great Greek philosopher, Sophocles the famous Greek tragic poet, Horace the Roman lyric poet. The Elysian Fields were the abode of the happy dead.

empty stomach; I incline to the belief that Sophocles was at all times a light breakfaster; Horace must regret that he passed into the Elysian Fields without knowing the refreshing qualities of a grapefruit. If my post-mortem terminal were less problematical, I should like to carry him a grapefruit—a specimen not chilled to death in cold storage—and divide it with him, perhaps adding a splash of Falernian for memory's sake. But the habits of the good and great of olden times are not of the slightest importance to us of twentieth-century America. Still, not to ignore wholly the familiar literary associations suggested by my subject, Samuel Rogers and his weakness for entertaining at breakfast shall have honorable mention. Rogers's breakfasts, one of his contemporaries hinted, were a cunning test of the fitness of the guests to be promoted to the host's dinner table—a process I should have reversed, on the theory that the qualifications for breakfast guests are far more exacting than those for a dinner company. We have testimony that Rogers's breakfasts, informal and with every one at ease, were much more successful than his dinners. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Moore, Southey and Macaulay, the Duke of Wellington and Lord John Russell were fellows to make a lively breakfast table. At one of these functions Coleridge talked for three hours on poetry, an occasion on which, we may assume, the variety or quality of the food didn't matter greatly.

Breakfast as a social medium has never flourished in America, chiefly because of our lack of leisure. Where recognized at all it is thrown into the middle of the day where it becomes an anomaly, an impudent intrusion. A breakfast that is a luncheon is not a breakfast, but a concession to the

Philistines. Once, with considerable difficulty, I persuaded a lady of my acquaintance to undertake to popularize breakfast by asking a company, few and fit, for eight o'clock. The first party was delightful, and the second, moved along to nine, was equally successful. But the hostess was so pleased with her success that she increased the number of guests to a dozen and then to fifteen, and advanced the hour to noon, with the result that the felicity of the earlier hours was lost. One must have a concrete programme to be of service in these reforms, and I shall say quite fearlessly that a round table set for six is the ideal arrangement.

A breakfast must be planned with greatest care. It should never be resorted to as a means of paying social debts, but arranged with the utmost independence. Where a wife is a desirable guest and the husband is not, there is no reason why a plate should be wasted. On the other hand, I should as rigidly exclude the wife who is socially a non-conductor. The talk at a breakfast table must be spirited, and it will not be otherwise if the company is well chosen. It's an absurd idea that candle-light is essential to sociability and that wit will not sparkle in the early morning. Some of the best talk I ever listened to has been at breakfast tables, where the guests conversed freely under the inspiration of a mounting sun. Doctor Holmes clearly believed the breakfast hour appropriate for the disclosure of the sprightliest philosophy.

An American novelist once explained that he did his writing in the afternoon because he couldn't make love in the morning. Not make love in the morning! The thought is barbarous. Morning is of sentiment all compact. Morn-

ing to the lover who possesses a soul is washed with Olympian dews. The world is all before him where to choose and his heart is his only guide. Love is not love that fears the morning light. . . . There was a house by the sea, whence a girl used to dart forth every morning for a run over the rocks. We used to watch her from our windows, admiring the lightness of her step, her unconscious grace as she was silhouetted on some high point of the shore against the blue of the sea and sky. It was to think of him, her lover, in the free sanctuary of the new, clean day that she ran that morning race with her own spirits. And he, perhaps knowing that she was thus preparing herself for their first meeting, would fly after her, and they would come running back, hand in hand, and appear with glowing cheeks and shining eyes at the breakfast table, to communicate to the rest of us the joy of youth.

There are houses in which participation in the family breakfast is frankly denied to the guest, who is informed that by pressing a button in his room coffee will appear at any hour that pleases his fancy. Let us consider this a little. The ideal guest is rare; the number of persons one really enjoys having about, free to penetrate the domestic arcana, is small indeed. This I say who am not an inhospitable soul. That a master and mistress should keep the morning free is, however, no sign of unfriendliness; the shoving of breakfast into a room does not argue necessarily for churlishness, and I have never so interpreted it. A hostess has her own affairs to look after, and the despatch of trays upstairs enables her to guard her morning from invasion. Still, in a country house, a guest is entitled to a fair shot at the morning. The day is happier when the household as-

sembles at a fixed hour not to be trifled with by a lazy and inconsiderate guest.

Moreover, we are entitled to know what our fellows look like in the morning hours. I have spoken of lovers, and there is no sterner test of the affections than a breakfast-table inspection. Is a yawn unbecoming? We have a right to know with what manner of yawn we are to spend our lives. Is it painful to listen to the crunching of toast in the mouth of the adored? Is the wit laggard in the morning hours when it should be at its nimblest? These are grave matters not lightly to be brushed aside. At breakfast the blemish in the damask cheek publishes itself shamelessly; an evil temper that is subdued by candle-light will betray itself over the morning coffee. At breakfast we are what we are, and not what we may make ourselves for good or ill before the stars twinkle.

I protest against breakfast in bed as not only unsocial but unbecoming in the children of democracy. I have never succumbed to this temptation without experiencing a feeling of humiliation and cowardice. A proper punishment for such self-indulgence is inflicted by the stray crumbs that lodge between the sheets unless one be highly skilled in the handling of breakfast trays. Crumbs in bed! Procrustes* missed a chance here. The presence of emptied dishes in a bedroom is disheartening in itself; the sight of them brings to a sensitive soul a conviction of incompetence and defeat. You cannot evade their significance; they are the wreck of a battle lost before you have buckled on your armor or fired

*According to Greek legend, Procrustes was a giant who had an iron bedstead on which he used to tie all travellers whom he captured. If they were shorter than the bed, he stretched them to fit it. If they were too long, he cut off their feet.

an arrow at the foe. My experiments have been chiefly in hotels, where I have shrunk from appearing in a vast hall built for banqueting and wholly unsuitable for breakfasting; but better suffer this gloomy isolating experience than huddle between covers and balance a tray on stubborn knees that rebel at the indignity.

The club breakfast is an infamous device designed to relieve the mind of what should be the pleasant privilege of selection. I am uninformed as to who invented this iniquity of numbered alternatives, but I unhesitatingly pronounce him an enemy of mankind. Already too many forces are operating to beat down the imagination. I charge this monstrosity upon the propagandists of realism; certainly no romanticist in the full possession of his powers would tolerate a thing so deadly to the play of fancy. I want neither the No. 7 nor the No. 9 prescribed on the card; and the waiter's index finger wabbling down the margin in an attempt to assist me is an affront, an impudence. Breakfast should be an affair between man and his own soul; a business for the initiative, not the referendum.

Breakfast out of doors is the ideal arrangement, or in winter under an ample screen of glass. My own taste is for a perspective of sea or lake; but a lusty young river at the elbow is not to be despised. The camper, of course, has always the best of it; a breakfast of fresh-caught trout with an Indian for company serves to quicken such vestiges of the primitive as remain in us. But we do not, if we are wise, wait for ideal conditions. It is a part of the great game of life to make the best of what we have, particularly in a day that finds the world spinning madly "down the ringing grooves of change."

The breakfast table must be made a safe place for humanity, an inspirational centre of democracy. A land whose people drowsily turn over for another nap at eight o'clock, or languidly ring for coffee at eleven, is doomed to destruction. Of such laziness is unpreparedness born—the vanguard of the enemy already howling at the postern; treason rampant in the citadel; wailing in the court. Breakfast, a sensible meal at a seasonable hour; sausage or beefsteak if you are capable of such atrocities; or only a juicy orange if your appetite be dainty; but breakfast, a cheerful breakfast with family or friends, no matter how great the day's pressure. This, partaken of in a mood of kindliness and tolerance toward all the world, is a definite accomplishment. By so much we are victors, and whether the gulfs wash us down or we sight the happy isles we have set sail with flags flying and to the stirring roll of drums.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

This essay calls for rather more attentive reading than the ones that precede it, but it well repays this attention. It is a good example of the familiar essay with a literary flavor. The opening quotation is from Thackeray's novel *Pendennis,* the closing sentence is adapted from Tennyson, and there are frequent references to other writers, classic and modern.

Whom would the author have present at breakfast time?

What suggestions does he make as to the menu?

What does he think of breakfast in bed?

Sum up, in a few words, the main thought of the essay. Is the author always serious? Just how much of it do you think he means?

But the ideas in this essay, indeed in any familiar essay, are less important than the way they are expressed. The graceful style of this essay lends no small part of its charm. Read a

paragraph aloud, and see how smoothly the sentences flow. Then notice the apt choice of words, as in this sentence: "A hasty visit to the table, the *gulping* of coffee, the *vicious snapping* of teeth upon food hardly looked at, . . . is the poorest possible preparation for a day of honest work." A third element that contributes to one's enjoyment of this essay is its humor. The humor of this essay is not like the humor of the vaudeville joke nor the comic page of the newspaper. It does not demand a loud explosion of laughter; rather one greets it with a quiet smile. In this essay, for example, the description of the breakfast menu, on page 187, is a good example of the delicate humor of the essayist.

Another source of pleasure in reading this essay is that one familiar with literature finds in it echoes of many famous lines of poetry. For example, the sentence "Morning is of imagination all compact" recalls Shakespeare:

> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> —*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

The sentence "The world is all before him, where to choose," is taken almost exactly from Milton's "Paradise Lost." The sentence "By so much are we victors, and whether the gulfs wash us down or we sight the happy isles," etc., comes from Tennyson's "Ulysses," where the lines run:

> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down,
> It may be we shall touch the happy Isles.

The style of the essay, then, is full of allusions to literature.

Words worth looking up: matutinal, banal, retrospective, progenitors, obtuse, inure, iteration, arcana, delete.

Suggested Essay Subjects

An Ideal Breakfast.
A Dinner That Was Ruined.
The Lunch Hour.

Company for Dinner.
A Perfect Dinner.
Interruptions at Meal Time.
Eating Out of Doors.

The following essays, which deal with similar subjects, might be read in connection with Mr. Nicholson's paper: "On Certain Things to Eat," Karle Wilson Baker, in Tanner's *Modern Familiar Essays;* "Hosts and Guests," Max Beerbohm, in *And Even Now,* also given in Bessey and Ryan's *Literary By-Paths.* And of course, if you do not know it already, read Charles Lamb's "Grace Before Meat" in the *Essays of Elia.*

NOON-HOUR ADVENTURING

JOYCE KILMER

JOYCE KILMER

Joyce Kilmer (1886–1918) affords an instance of a most promising career cut short by the World War. He was born in New Brunswick, N. J., attended Rutgers College for two years, then went to Columbia, where he graduated in 1906. He taught Latin in the Morristown (N. J.) High School for a year, and decided that that was not his work. Going to New York he found employment on the Standard Dictionary, defining words at five cents a word. He did his work well, and soon won promotion. Meanwhile he wrote: sometimes poetry, sometimes socialistic articles for *The Call,* later editorials for a staid religious paper called *The Churchman.* His poem "Trees" appeared in 1913, and won him wide recognition as a poet. He wrote frequent reviews for the *New York Times Review of Books;* he conducted the poetry department of *The Literary Digest,* selecting the best contemporary poetry for that page. He wrote frequently for the *New York Times Magazine,* both essays and verse. His poem "The White Ships and the Red," written on the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a submarine, was reprinted widely in America and England. He felt deeply on the side of the Allies, and within three weeks of the time our country entered the World War he left an important editorial position and enlisted as a private, joining the regiment that was to go first to France. In France he had the opportunity to do clerical work, where he would be safe, but he insisted upon going to the front. An officer wrote of him: "He would always be doing more than his orders called for—that is, getting much nearer to the enemy's position than any officer would be inclined to send him. Night after night he would lie out in No Man's Land, crawling through barbed wires in an effort to locate enemy positions and enemy guns."

On July 30, 1918, he was killed in action near the Ourcq, and buried where he fell. His name will always be linked with that of Alan Seeger and Rupert Brooke: three young poets who fell in the World War.

His writings have been collected in three volumes; they comprise essays, poems, reviews, and letters.

NOON-HOUR ADVENTURING*

JOYCE KILMER

Sun worship, according to the latest religious census, is no longer a popular cult. This is a pity, for it was more respectable and more diverting than most of the forms of paganism that have superseded it.

But the sun is a good-humored deity; he showered his gifts no more generously of old on Teheran, whose walls were resonant with his praise, than now on faithless New York. Daily from his meridian he stretches forth his shining scimitar and strikes the fetters from the feet of young men, setting them free to walk the golden streets of an enchanted city.

The feet, I said, of young men. For men no longer young the noon hour is a time for the comfortable but unromantic occupation of eating. The man who usually takes a car to get from Thirty-third Street to Times Square, who occasionally lets the barber rub tonic on the top of his head, who carries blocks and dolls home on Saturday, who is morbidly interested in building loans and grass-seed, regards the noon hour as at worst a time for shopping and at best a time for eating. But to the young man, particularly to the young man for the first time a wage-earner in the city, the noon hour is a time for splendid adventuring.

It may be that there are young women for whom the luncheon hour is a gay thread of romance in the dull fabric

*From *The Circus and Other Essays*, by Joyce Kilmer, copyrighted by Doubleday, Doran & Co.

of the working day. Of this I cannot speak with certainty; my observation indicates that they regard it merely as an opportunity to go, in chattering companies, to those melancholy retreats called tea rooms to amuse themselves with gossip and extraordinary ices. But the young man leaves his desk at the appointed hour as bravely as ever pirate vessel left its wharf, and sails forth to sparkling and uncharted seas.

Consider, for example, the case of James Jones. James spent his boyhood in a town less than a hundred miles from New York. Visits to the city were great events in his young life. He was taken there to buy clothing, to go to the theatre, to visit unusually exciting relatives who lived in apartment-houses, rode on elevators, and drew milk from dumb-waiters. During his collegiate career James made occasional trips to New York, always with the theatre and the tavern as his objectives. Triumphantly now he feels himself actually a New Yorker, a dweller in no mean city. Joyfully, therefore, he goes forth every noon to explore the territory of his new possession.

James is, let it be understood, nearer 20 than 25. He is beginning to regard his diploma with some disrespect, but he still wears his fraternity pin on an obscure corner of his waistcoat. Every Saturday morning he gets an envelope containing a $10 bill and a $5 bill, and he has already formulated in his mind an eloquent appeal which cannot fail, he believes, to increase that amount to $18.50. James endeavors to seem as sophisticated as the chauffeur of a taxicab; not for worlds would he betray the innocent delight with which he regards the city of his habitation.

With James's occupation from 9 in the morning until

the luncheon hour we have no concern. Perhaps he sits on a high stool and ciphers in a great ledger, perhaps he haltingly dictates letters to a patronizing stenographer, perhaps he urges certain necessities or luxuries upon a suspicious public. The important fact of his life—for us and, in a measure, for him—is that once every day he answers the welcome summons of the unknown.

Luncheon is a tiresome obligation, quickly to be fulfilled. His mother would be vexed to see him gulp his malted milk or bolt his sandwich. On some occasions, with a pleasant sense of recklessness, he enters a bar, and, with something of a flourish, consumes beer and free lunch. With some difficulty he refrains from looking over the swinging doors before leaving, as he did in his home town, to make sure that none of his neighbors are coming down the street.

James left his desk only six minutes ago and his luncheon is already over. There remain fifty-four precious minutes. Behold him tasting rapturously of every second of these minutes! Behind a cheap but decorative cigar he walks up, perhaps, Fifth Avenue, undeniably that excellent thoroughfare's possessor. For his delight is Diana poised on her tower of purple memories; the grass of Madison Square is greener than that of his father's lawn; tulips more vivid than these never bloomed in the rich gardens of Holland.

He is considered a sympathetic person, but at noon, I fear, his attitude is that of a realist. For he watches with ingenuous interest the antics of that drunkard on a park bench, and regards the arrival of the patrol wagon and summary removal of the culprit as a drama got up solely

for his entertainment. Regrettable as it may seem, it is with heightened spirits that he continues his stroll.

Now he has reached a great bookshop which even the penniless find hospitable. "Some day," says James to himself, "two hundred copies of my novel will draw a crowd around this plate-glass window." Mentally he arranges an effective window display and goes on to feast his eyes on vellum and shagreen, on calf delicately tooled and parchment gay with gold leaf and many-colored inks. Sometimes he enters the shop (the clerks are indulgent to James and his kind) and, over the merry pages of *Jugend* and *La Vie Parisienne*, rejoices that his father made him study modern languages at college.

But literature must not claim too much of his fast-fleeting hour. There are shops at hand whose windows show things stranger than books: chairs and bedsteads eloquent of the genius of Adam and Heppelwhite; the massive silver platter on which old Wardle carved a Christmas goose when Mr. Pickwick was his guest; a mighty flagon that brimmed with red wine for Pantagruel; a carved jade bracelet from the brown arm of the Princess Badoura; the sword of Robert Bruce. All lands, all ages have sent their treasures to New York this noon for the entertainment of James Jones.

It may be that this square of Japanese embroidery, on which fantastic knights thrust tremendous javelins at red and green dragons under astonished willows, was made in Paterson, N. J. What of that? The colors are not therefore less bright. James is not a purchaser, he is merely a spectator of the greatest raree-show in the world. It is well for him to be deceived in the splendors displayed before him. Not so

many years ago he would prefer a red glass ball to the Kohinoor and a hand organ with a monkey to a piano with Paderewski. James yet retains a receptivity almost infantile; but it would pain him to be told so.

They are not gregarious, at noon, these young discoverers of New York. They are selfish in their adventuring, for a vision shared is only half a vision. James, I know, is annoyed when he finds an acquaintance gobbling a sandwich at his luncheon counter or staring in a jeweler's window that he has come to regard as his own private property. On Sundays he is sociable enough; he is glad of a companion on his journeys across and up and down Manhattan, among the Italians and negroes of the upper west side, through the loud ghetto and speciously weird Chinatown, in the deliberate sylvanity of Central Park and the Bronx Gardens. In the evening, too, he is not at all a recluse. But at noon he has no appetite for conversation; he would not have his attention taken from the strange streets by an accustomed human being.

James has never ridden on a London bus, yet I believe in the truth of his unspoken thought, that a Fifth Avenue bus is the most excellent vehicle in the world. The London bus depends for its charm on a number of non-essential qualities; on the humor of its driver (are the chauffeurs of London's electric busses also masters of epigram?), on the quaintness and antiquity of the thoroughfare, on the military efficiency of the traffic policemen, on the philmayishness* of the passengers. The Fifth Avenue bus has one reason for existence: it shows its passengers Fifth Avenue. No bus can do more.

*Phil May was a London cartoonist, famous for his sketches of street scenes.

So one may (if one is young enough to be so foolish and so wise) ride, like the Gaikwar of Baroda in his swaying howdah, high above the people for a golden hour. He may start at uneasy Washington Square, where ancient respectability wars with young bohemianism. Soon he looks down on the throngs of new Americans that tramp the once proud pavement. From his high seat he sees them, the small, dark men and women who, like him, are for a time released from labor. They move slowly in great crowds, they eat frugal meals, the wares of curb-side peddlers, they talk and gesture incessantly. What does James think of them? I do not believe that his opinion is worth knowing.

But he enjoys, I know, the tour through the traffic-filled intersection of Broadway and Twenty-third Street, and he is not old enough to notice with regret the gradual deterioration of the latter street. Freed from the close company of baser vehicles, how triumphantly the bus whirs up the broad street past the square, among the splendid shops and clubs and churches—the true New Yorker, I think, names them in this order. But James must not give too much attention to the lovely Gothic lines of St. Thomas's, or the lovely Byzantine lines of that pink chiffon lady in the landau—the luncheon hour draws to a close, and punctuality, he still believes, is a business virtue.

The brevity of this recess is essential to it. If the time be indefinitely increased, if the young adventurer be allowed all the morning and all the afternoon for his wandering, then all the zest goes out of the adventure. There is that trusted veteran employee in the corner of the office. He receives fabulous sums on pay day and may go out to luncheon whenever he desires, with no time clerk to censor

him. He knows New York less than does James. But does his curiosity urge him forth to long adventures? Over his stale morning's paper in the deserted office, seated before his familiar task, he eats his sordid and wife-made luncheon!

But the noon adventurer is not limited to Fifth Avenue. The antique shops of Fourth Avenue charm him with pewter and brass, they cheer his heart with sun dials from English rose gardens and crucifixes from convents of Dante's land and time. At Twenty-third Street stalls he reads bits of forgotten writings and breathes the pleasant scent of worn calfskin. Perhaps on the 15-cent rack he comes upon a prize. Here is a little book of English verse by a Japanese poet. What is this faded inscription? "To Mary McLane from Yone Noguchi." The adventurer buys it, as the late Mr. Morgan would buy a Nuremburg Bible, and salves his economical conscience by rolling his own cigarettes for a while.

There are great sights for him, now and then. People who seemed, not so long ago, as legendary as Cuchulain and Cinderella appear to him on these noon expeditions, most startlingly human and real. He sees Mr. Roosevelt leave the Charities Building to enter a waiting taxicab. He visits the bootblack and in the chair next to him sits Mr. Bliss Carman, crowned with the huge black hat that is the livery of Vagabondia. On Fourteenth Street a big black-haired man and a little spectacled woman stop to laugh at the fortune-telling paroquets. With a delicious thrill the adventurer recognizes Mr. Ben Reitman and Miss Emma Goldman.

Nor are his adventures confined to seeing. There is plenty

of action, sometimes. Once, as he stared into the windows of an Oriental rug shop, he was aware of a thin, hunted-looking man who demanded his attention.

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said the hunted-looking man, "but can you tell me where I can find a parnbroker?"

I do not know why the hunted-looking man said "parnbroker," instead of "pawnbroker," but James always tells the story this way.

"No," said James, truthfully, "I can't."

"The reason I wanna know is," said the hunted-looking man very rapidly, "I gotta very fine stone here. I got into a little trouble in a hotel uptown; I gotta sell it right away very cheap."

And from a dirty pasteboard box he drew what seemed to be a large diamond ring.

Now was the thoroughly interested James aware of yet another stranger who sought his attention, a prosperous-looking man, who smoked a fat cigar and flourished a silver-headed stick, who seemed trying to caution James against buying the diamond.

James had only 35 cents in his pocket, and was not a buyer, but a spectator of jewelry anyway. The hunted-looking man withdrew slowly. Then said the prosperous-looking man to James:

"Excuse me for buttin' in, old man, but I didn't want to see you stung. Sometimes these here fellers got real stones, sometimes they got fakes. Now I'm a professional jeweler and I got my microscope that I look at diamonds with in my pocket. Now, you call that guy back and tell him I'm a friend of yours and I'll examine that stone and tell you if it's any good."

The hunted-looking man gave rather too dramatic a

start of surprise when called back by the suspicious but curious James.

"It's worth $500," he said, "but I'll sell it for $50. I got into a little trouble at a hotel uptown, and I gotta sell it cheap."

Professionally, elaborately, impressively, the prosperous-looking man screwed a glass into his eye and squinted at the stone. Then, taking James several yards away from the hunted-looking man, he said: "That's a genuine stone worth easy $500 if it's worth a cent. I know a place they'll give us $500 for it this afternoon on account of me being in the trade. Now, you keep him here while I go round the corner and get $25 from my bank and then we'll buy that stone together and make $225 apiece before two hours is gone. I'll be right back."

And the prosperous-looking man vanished.

Then—as might have been expected—the hunted-looking man offered James the diamond for $25. "You can put one over on that big guy," he said. "Slip me $25 and we beat it before he gets back. You can clean up $450 on it. I'm afraid of that big guy; I think he's gone after a cop."

Now, these two confidence men had worked hard with James. He should not have taken such delight in their discomfiture as he climbed the steps of a bus and bade them farewell.

When he met the hunted-looking man and the prosperous-looking man together on Broadway a few days later they cut him, and I do not blame them. But they gave him a real adventure, at any rate, an adventure not to be met by those who squander their noon hour sitting dully in sedate restaurants.

Then there was the adventure of the picture gallery. James

went on one occasion to a futurist exhibition in a tiny room not far from Madison Square. Galleries are not crowded at noon, but from the room that James approached came sounds not to be accounted for even by the crazy canvases on its walls. Of course James went in, and found a futurist painter wrestling with the agent of a collection agency. The combatants rose, and demanded James's name and address, that he might be summoned to court as a witness to assault and battery. But he never received either summons. Perhaps it was because he gave his name as Henry Smith of Yonkers.

Episodes like these have little charm for the middle-aged or for young men prematurely aged by spending their childhood in New York. These have their compensations, no doubt; their lives are not utterly bleak. But not for them is the daily romance of the young man who has just come to the city, who enjoys the proud novelty of working for wage, to whom every noon come sweet and strange the streets' compelling voices.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

This essay was written shortly before the World War, as one might guess from the reference to Theodore Roosevelt, who was then engaged in editorial work in New York City. Emma Goldman was a famous anarchist, and Ben Reitman a well-known radical speaker. Note that a bit of narration is introduced, the story of the two confidence men. The essay is a flexible form that admits of bringing in other types of literature.

Is the title of this essay well chosen? Why?

What things does James find interesting in his rambles?

Do you have a rather good idea of the kind of person James is? What are some of his traits?

Here are some suggested essay subjects. Choose one of these, or a similar topic of your own, then take the trip, trying to see as much as Kilmer saw. Take notes, then write.

A Ramble in Our Town.
A Walk at Night.
Sights from a Bus.
Christmas Shoppers.
A Walk on the Water Front.
Crossing the Ferry.

If you enjoyed this essay, get the book from which it is taken, *The Circus and Other Essays,* and read the essay on "The Circus." Or try a book by Christopher Morley, say *Mince Pie* or *Plum Pudding.* Or a volume of Robert C. Holliday's, *Walking Stick Papers* or *Broome Street Straws.* Or a book by E. V. Lucas, the English essayist, such as *Loiterer's Harvest* or *Adventures and Enthusiasms.* All are written in the same easy style as this essay by Kilmer.

ON LIVELIHOODS

CHARLES S. BROOKS

CHARLES S. BROOKS

Charles S. Brooks is an exception to most authors in that he began by entering business, made a success in it, then deliberately turned away from it to take up writing. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1878; attended West High School there, then went to Yale, graduating in 1900. In college he was a very wide reader, but wrote little. After graduation, at his father's request, he entered business. His father was president of a large stationery and printing firm. He believed that a boy should start at the bottom, even though he had a college degree. So Charles spent the next few years in learning about lead pencils, ink, carbon paper, and rubber bands. When he had mastered these subjects, he was sent out to sell them. He succeeded, and was rapidly promoted, becoming secretary and then vice-president of the company. And then, after fifteen years of successful business life, he deliberately gave up his position. He went to New York, where he worked as hard at writing as he had at business. He says:

"New York was opportunity, and for three years, to overcome my tardy start, I kept my nose closely to my desk,—lonely years in part, for I had cut the string that held me to my friends. Men younger than myself were far ahead, and it was my task to trot a little faster through longer hours to gain a yard or so on my handicap. But business instructed me to work upon necessity and not wait for a rising wind of inspiration. I learned that only in long hours, in full and exacting days, may success be won."

And so success was won by him for the second time. His books have a well-deserved popularity. He now lives in Cleveland, and besides his writing, takes an active interest in the Little Theatre movement. He has written two plays, "Wappin' Wharf" and "At the Sign of the Greedy Pig," which are published in a volume called *Frightful Plays*. His books of essays are: *A Journey to Bagdad, There's Pippins and Cheese to*

Come, Chimney-Pot Papers (from which the essay "On Livelihood" is taken) and *Like Summer's Cloud*. He has also written three books of travel: *Hints to Pilgrims, Roundabout to Canterbury,* and *Roads to the North*. These are as readable as his essays.

ON LIVELIHOODS*

CHARLES S. BROOKS

SOMEWHERE in his letters, I think, Stevenson pronounces street paving to be his favorite occupation. I fancy, indeed, —and I have ransacked his life,—that he never applied himself to its practice for an actual livelihood. That was not necessary. Rather, he looked on at the curb in a careless whistling mood, hands deep in the pockets of his breeks, in a lazy interval between plot and essay. The sunny morning had dropped its golden invitation through his study windows, and he has wandered forth to see the world. Let my heroes—for thus I interpret him at his desk as the sunlight beckoned—let my heroes kick their heels in patience! Let villains fret inside the inkpot! Down, sirs, down, into the glossy magic pool, until I dip you up! Pirates—for surely such miscreants lurked among his papers—let pirates, he cries, save their red oaths until to-morrow! My hat! My stick!

It was thus, then, as an amateur that Stevenson looked on street paving—the even rows of cobbles, the nice tapping to fit the stones against the curb, the neat joint around the drain. And yet, unpardonably, he neglects the tarpot; and this seems the very soul of the business, the finishing touch—almost culinary, as when a cook pours on a chocolate sauce.

I remember pleasantly when our own street was paved. There had been laid a waterpipe, deep down where the

*From *Chimney-Pot Papers*, by Charles S. Brooks, copyrighted by Yale University Press.

earth was yellow—surely gold was near—and several of us young rascals climbed in and out in the twilight when work was stopped. By fits we were both mountaineers and miners. There was an agreeable gassy smell as if we neared the lower regions. Here was a playground better than the building of a barn, even with its dizzy ladders and the scaffolding around the chimney. Or we hid in the great iron pipes that lay along the gutters, and followed our leader through them home from school. But when the pipes were lowered into place and the surface was cobbled but not yet sanded, then the tarpot yielded gum for chewing. At any time after supper a half dozen of us—blacker daubs against the darkness—might have been seen squatting on the stones, scratching at the tar. Blackjack, bought at the corner, had not so full a flavor. But one had to chew forward in the mouth—lightly, lest the tar adhere forever to the teeth.

And yet I am not entirely in accord with Stevenson in his preference.

And how is it, really, that people fall into their livelihoods? What circumstance or necessity drives them? Does choice, after all, always yield to a contrary wind and run for any port? Is hunger always the helmsman? How many of us, after due appraisal of ourselves, really choose our own parts in the mighty drama?—first citizen or second, with our shrill voices for a moment above the crowd—first citizen or second—brief choristers, except for vanity, against a painted scene. How runs the rhyme?—rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief; doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief! And a robustious fellow with great voice, and lace and sword, strutting forward near the lights.

Meditating thus, I frequently poke about the city in the

end of afternoon "when the mind of your man of letters requires some relaxation." I peer into shop windows, not so much for the wares displayed as for glimpses of the men and women engaged in their disposal. I watch laborers trudging home with the tired clink of their implements and pails. I gaze into cellarways where tailor and cobbler sit bent upon their work—needle and peg, their world—and through fouled windows into workrooms, to learn which livelihoods yield the truest happiness. For it is, on the whole, a whistling rather than a grieving world, and like little shouts among the hills is laughter echoed in the heart.

I can well understand how one can become a baker or even a small grocer with a pencil behind his ear. I could myself honestly recommend an apple—an astrachan for sauces—or, in the season, offer asparagus with something akin to enthusiasm. Cranberries, too, must be an agreeable consort of the autumn months when the air turns frosty. I would own a cat with a dusty nose to rub along the barrels and sleep beneath the stove. I would carry dried meats in stock were it only for the electric slicing machine. And whole cheeses! Or to a man of romantic mind an old brass shop may have its lure. To one of musty turn, who would sit apart, there is something to be said for the repair of violins and 'cellos. At the least he sweetens discord into melody.

But I would not willingly keep a second-hand bookshop. It is too cluttered a business. There is too free a democracy between good and bad. It was Dean Swift who declared that collections of books made him melancholy, "where the best author is as much squeezed and as obscure as a porter at a coronation." Nor is it altogether reassuring for one who

is himself by way of being an author to view the certain neglect that awaits him when attics are cleared at last. There is too leathery a smell upon the premises, a thick deposit of mortality. I draw a deep breath when I issue on the street, grateful for the sunlight and the wind. However, I frequently put my head in at Pratt's around the corner, sometimes by chance when the family are assembled for their supper in one of the book alcoves. They have swept back a litter of historians to make room for the tray of dishes. To cut them from the shop they have drawn a curtain in front of their nook, but I can hear the teapot bubbling on the counter. There is, also, a not unsavory smell which, if my old nose retains its cunning, is potato stew, fetched up from the kitchen. If you seek Gibbon now, Pratt's face will show like a withered moon between the curtains and will request you to call later when the dishes have been cleared.

No one works in cleaner produce than carpenters. They are for the most part a fatherly whiskered tribe and they eat their lunches neatly from a pail, their backs against the wall, their broad toes upturned. I look suspiciously on painters, however, who present themselves for work like slopped and shoddy harlequins, and although I have myself passed a delightful afternoon painting a wooden fence at the foot of the garden—and been scraped afterward—I would not wish to be of their craft.

But perhaps one is of restless habit and a peripatetic occupation may be recommended. For a bachelor of small expense, at a hazard, a wandering fruit and candy cart offers the venture and chance of unfamiliar journeys. There is a breed of lollypop on a stick that shows a handsome profit

when the children come from school. Also, at this minute, I hear below me on the street the flat bell of the scissors-grinder. I know not what skill is required, yet it needs a pretty eye and even foot. The ragman takes to an ancestral business and chants the ancient song of his fathers. When distance has somewhat muffled its nearer sharpness, the song bears a melody unparalleled among tradesmen's cries. Window glass, too, is hawked pleasantly from house to house and requires but a knife and putty. In the spring the vegetable vender, standing in his wagon, utters melodious sounds that bring the housewives to their windows. Once, also, by good luck, I fell into acquaintance with a fellow who peddled brooms and dustpans along the countryside. He was hung both front and back with cheap commodities —a necklace of scrubbing brushes—tins jangling against his knees. A very kitchen had become biped. A pantry had gone on pilgrimage. Except for dogs, which seemed maddened by his strange appearance, it was, he informed me, an engaging livelihood for a man who chafed indoors. Or for one of dreamy disposition the employment of a sandwich man, with billboards fore and aft, offers a profitable repose. Sometimes several of these philosophers journey together up the street in a crowded hour, one behind another with slow introspective step, as befits their high preoccupation.

Or one has an ear, and the street-organ commends itself. Observe the musician at the corner, hat in hand and smiling! Let but a curtain stir and his eye will catch it. He hears a falling penny as 'twere any nightingale. His tunes are the herald of the gaudy spring. His are the dancing measures of the sunlight. And is any one a surer judge of human

nature? He allows dyspeptics to slink along the fence. Those of bilious aspect may go their ways unchallenged. Spare me those, he says, who have not music in their souls: they are fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. It was with a flute that the poet Goldsmith starved his way through France. Yet the flute is a cold unstirring instrument. He would have dined the oftener had he pitched upon a street-organ.

But in this Christmas season there is a man goes up and down among the shoppers blowing shrill tunes upon a pipe. A card upon his hat announces that it is music makes the home and that one of his marvellous implements may be bought for the trifling and altogether insignificant sum of ten cents. A reticule across his stomach bulges with his pipes. He seems to manipulate the stops with his fingers, but I fancy that he does no more than sing into the larger opening. Yet his gay tune sounds above the traffic.

I have wondered where such seasonal professions recruit themselves. The eyeglass man still stands at his corner with his tray. He is, moreover, too sodden a creature to play upon a pipe. Nor is there any dwindling of shoe-lace peddlers. The merchants of popcorn have not fallen off in number, and peanuts hold up strong. Rather, these Christmas musicians are of the tribe which at other festivals sell us little flags and bid us show our colors. They come from country fairs and circuses. All summer long they bid us gather for the fat man, or they cry up the beauties of a Turkish harem. If some valiant fellow in a painted tent is about to swallow glass, they are his horn and drum to draw the crowd. I once knew a side-show man who bent iron bars between his teeth and who summoned stout men

from his audience to swing upon the bar, but I cannot believe that he has discharged the bawling rascal at his door. I rather choose to think that the piper was one of those selfsame artists who, on lesser days, squeeze comic rubber faces in their fingers, or make the monkey climb its predestined stick.

Be this as it may, presently the piper hit on a persuasive tune and I abandoned all thought of the Noah's ark—my errand of the morning for my nephew—and joined the crowd that followed him. Hamelin Town* was come again. But street violins I avoid. They suggest mortgages and unpaid rent.

But with the world before him why should a man turn dentist? He must have been a cruel fellow from his rattle. When did his malicious ambition first sprout up toward molars and bicuspids? Or who would scheme to be a plumber? He is a cellarer—alas, how shrunk from former days! Or consider the tailor! Perhaps you recall Elia's† estimate. "Do you ever see him," he asks, "go whistling along the footpath like a carman, or brush through a crowd like a baker, or go smiling to himself like a lover?"

Certainly I would not wish to be a bookkeeper and sit bent all day over another's wealth. I would not want to bring in on lifted fingers the meats which another eats. Nor would I choose to be a locksmith, which is a kind of squint-eyed business, up two dismal stairs and at the rear. A gas lamp flares at the turn. A dingy staircase mounts into a thicker gloom. The locksmith consorts with pawnbrokers,

*A reference to Robert Browning's poem, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." In this when the piper plays a certain tune, all the children in the city follow him away.

†Elia, the name under which Charles Lamb published his essays.

with cheap sign-makers and with disreputable doctors; yet he is not of them. For there adheres to him a sort of romance. He is a creature of another time, set in our midst by the merest chance. The domestic cat, descended from the jungle, is not more shrunk. Keys have fallen on evil days. Observe the mighty row of them hung discarded along his boxes! Each one is fit to unlock a castle. Warwick itself might yield to such a weight of metal—rusty now, disused, quite out of fashion, displaced by a race of dwarfs. In the old prints, see how the London 'prentice runs with his great key in the dawn to take down his master's shutter! In a musty play, observe the jailer at the dungeon door! Without massive keys jingling at the belt the older drama must have been a weakling. Only lovers, then, dared to laugh at locksmiths. But now locksmiths sit brooding on the past, shrivelled to mean uses, ready for paltry kitchen jobs.

And the undertaker, what shall we say of him? That black coat with the flower! That mournful smile! That perfect grief! And yet, I am told, undertakers, after hours, go singing home to supper, and spend their evenings at the movies like us rougher folk. It was David Copperfield, you recall, who dined with an undertaker and his family—in the room, no doubt, next to the coffin storage—and he remarked at the time how cheerfully the joint went round. One of this sober cloth, moreover, has confided to me that they let themselves loose, above all professions, in their reunions and conventions. If an unusual riot issues from the door and a gay fellow goes walking on the table it is sure that either lawyers or undertakers sit inside.

For myself, if I were to become a merchant, I would choose a shop at a four-corners in the country, and I would

stock from shoe-laces to plows. There is no virtue in keeping store in the city. It is merely by favor that customers show themselves. Candidly, your competitor can better supply their wants. This is not so at the four-corners. Nor is any one a more influential citizen than a country merchant. He sets the style in calicoes. He judges between check and stripe. His decision against a high heel flattens the housewives by an inch. But if I kept such a country store, I would provide an open fire and, when the shadows lengthened, an easy chair or two for gossips.

I was meditating lately on these strange preferences in livelihoods and was gazing through the city windows for any clew when I was reminded of a tempting scheme that Wee Jessie—a delightful Scotswoman of my acquaintance—has planned for several of us.

We are to be travelling merchants for a season, with a horse and wagon or a motor. My own preference is a motor, and already I see a vehicle painted in bright colors and opening up behind as spacious as a waffle cart. There will be windows all around for the display of goods. It is not quite fixed what we shall sell. Wee Jessie leans toward bonnets and little millinery odds and ends. I am for kitchen tins. M—— inclines toward dry-goods, serviceable fabrics. It is thought that we shall live on the roof while on tour, with a canvas to draw on wet nights. We shall possess a horn—on which Wee Jessie once practised in her youth—to gather up the crowd when we enter a village.

Fancy us, therefore, my dear sir, as taking the road late this coming spring in time to spread the summer's fashions. And if you hear our horn at twilight in your village—a tune of more wind than melody, unless Jessie shall cure her

imperfections—know that on the morrow, by the pump, we shall display our wares.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

In the opening paragraph of this essay the writer imagines Stevenson as saying, when he wished to go out for a walk, "Let villains fret inside the inkpot." The reference is to a delightful essay by Stevenson in which he pictures John Silver and Captain Smollett as strolling out for a smoke before the author needs them. It is called "The Persons of the Story," and is found in the volume entitled *Fables*. Later in the essay the author speaks of a visit to Pratt's. This is a well-known second-hand bookstore on Sixth Avenue, New York, not far from the region known as Greenwich Village. In this locality Mr. Brooks lived for three years, training himself to be a writer.

Worth noting in this essay is the skill with which the author chooses his words, especially in the descriptions. He speaks of "a leathery smell" in a second-hand bookstore; of "a cat with a dusty nose," of the "agreeable gassy smell" of the deep ditch in the street. Find other examples of well-chosen words.

What occupations does Mr. Brooks find desirable? What ones does he disapprove of?

What occupations appeal to you? What ones would you strongly dislike?

"It is, on the whole, a whistling rather than a grieving world." Explain this statement. Do you agree with it?

What was unusual about Mr. Brooks's life?

What lessons may be gained from his life?

Words worth learning: culinary, consort, harlequin, peripatetic.

This essay suggests writing one like it. Here are possible subjects:

My Fancied Occupations.
Odd Play Places.
An Idle Afternoon.

Choosing Our Parents.
Street Merchants.
Off with a Circus.
Life with the Gypsies.

This is an example of the essay of fantasy, or one where the author lets his fancy play with improbable things. A famous essay of this type is Charles Lamb's "Dream Children," in *Essays of Elia.* Others are: "My Chateaux," in *Prue and I,* by George William Curtis; "First Reverie," in *Reveries of a Bachelor,* by Donald G. Mitchell; "The Magic Ring," in *Dream Days,* by Kenneth Grahame; "A Man of Property," in *If I May,* by A. A. Milne; and "On Accepting One's Parents," in *The View Vertical,* by Winifred Kirkland. If you liked Brooks's essay, you will like these. Or try something else from Brooks; a list of his books is given at the end of the sketch of his life.

FURNACE AND I

RALPH BERGENGREN

RALPH BERGENGREN

Ralph Bergengren (1882–), when asked by the editor of this book to tell something about himself and his furnace, wrote this:

"For the benefit of your students—I have been a miscellaneous writer from the time I left college, beginning before that event with occasional contributions to *The Harvard Lampoon* and to *Life*. For some years I was an occasional contributor to *Life*. Also I spent some months in an art school, and, for a time, made so-called humorous pictures for a Sunday newspaper in the earlier days of this kind of journalism. I have written for newspapers and magazines—special articles, editorials, verse, and fiction—and done some writing of advertisements. My best in fiction were the burlesque pirate stories published at one time in *Collier's*. Such books as I have written are recorded in *Who's Who*.

" 'Furnace and I' first appeared as a paper in the Contributors' Club of *The Atlantic*. It unfolds personal experience with a real furnace—I had never before met a furnace so intimately—and thus records incidentally a change of residence from city to country. I am still living with the same furnace, though less intimately, as another than I does what is called 'tending' it, a true word.

RALPH BERGENGREN."

The list of his works as given in *Who's Who* is as follows: *In Case of Need,* 1900; *The Comforts of Home,* 1918; *Jane, Joseph, & John—Their Book of Verses,* 1918; *The Perfect Gentleman,* 1919; *The Seven Ages of Man,* 1921; *David the Dreamer,* 1922; *Gentlemen All & Merry Companions,* 1922.

FURNACE AND I*

RALPH BERGENGREN

SUMMER is the favorite time to advertise furnaces, for, although a pacifist might argue that being prepared for cold weather encourages frost, the practical persons who make and sell heating plants are firm believers in preparedness. They produce diagrams and pictures, showing how *their* furnace bisects the coal bill, and how easily a pretty child can run it from the front hall.

But my furnace is different. I defy the prettiest child imaginable to run it. Indeed, in a strict sense, I defy anybody to run it; for this furnace has a mind of its own and an odd ambition to behave like a thermometer. On a warm day it goes up, on a cold day it goes down; in zero weather it takes all the time of a determined man to head it off from becoming a large, inconvenient refrigerator. As for bisecting coal bills, the creature *likes coal.* I have even thought that it uttered strange, self-congratulatory, happy noises whenever there occurred a rise in the price of its favorite edible.

Before meeting this furnace I had lived in apartments, and my mental conception of a ton of coal had been as of something enormous, sufficient to heat the average house a month. A furnace was to me a remote mystery operated by a high priest called "janitor," whom I vaguely connected with the lines of Smollett,—

> Th' Hesperian dragon not more fierce and fell;
> Nor the gaunt, growling janitor of Hell.

*From *The Comforts of Home*, by Ralph Bergengren, copyrighted by Little, Brown and Company.

I took my heat as a matter of course. If I wanted more of it, I spoke warmly to the janitor through a speaking tube, and—after a while—there was more heat. If I wanted less, I spoke to him coldly, in the same distant, godlike way, and—after a while—there was less heat. In neither case, I discovered, did an ordinary tone of voice get any result whatever; and, although a fat man himself, he sometimes growled back through the tube very much like the gaunt specimen mentioned by Smollett. But I gave little thought to him. I had what is called an "intelligent idea" that to produce more heat he opened a "draft," and to reduce heat he closed it, the effect of a draft on a furnace being just the opposite to its effect on a janitor. At night he "shook the furnace down," in the morning he "shook the furnace up." One gathers such knowledge casually, without conscious effort or realization. I had in fact no more curiosity about the furnace than about the sun, for I seemed as unlikely to run one heater as the other.

Then, like many another man who has lived in apartments, I turned suburbanite. I had a furnace, and I had to run it myself. How well I remember that autumn day when I started my first furnace fire!

There sat the monster on the floor of the cellar, impassive as Buddha, and apparently holding up the house with as many arms as an octopus—hollow arms through which presently would flow the genial heat. I peeked cautiously through a little door into his stomach, and marvelled at its hollow immensity. I reached in till my arm ached—and my hand dangled in empty space. But my intelligence told me that there must be a bottom. Crumpling a newpaper into a great wad, I dropped it down, down into the mon-

ster's gullet, where it vanished forever. I crumpled and dropped another; I continued, until at last—oh, triumph of mind and industry over incalculable depth!—I *saw newspaper,* and had something tangible on which to erect a pyre of kindlings. Where I could reach I laid them crosswise, and where I couldn't I tossed them in at varying angles, gaining skill with practice.

"It is like a great wooden nest!" cried I in astonishment. *"Now* I know why the coal I have bought for my furnace is called 'egg.'"

I lit the fire and made a grand smoke.

It rose through the kindlings; it piled out through the little door; it hung like great cobwebs to the roof of the cellar. With great presence of mind I hastily closed the little door and ran lightly up the cellar-stairs. The smoke had preceded me; it got there first through the registers; and more was coming.

I met a woman.

"Is the house afire?" she asked excitedly.

I calmed her. "It is *not,"* I replied quietly, in a matter-of-course way. "When you start a fire for the winter it always smokes a little."

We opened the windows. We went outside and looked at the house. It leaked smoke through every crevice except, curiously enough, the chimney. Ah-h-h-h-h! I saw what had happened. I groped my way to the cellar and opened the back damper. Now the smoke went gladly up the chimney, and the view through the little door was at once beautiful and awful: it was like looking into the heart of an angry volcano. Evidently it was time to lay the eggs on the nest.

I shovelled the abyss full of coal, and the volcano became extinct. Presently, instead of a furnace full of fire, I had a furnace full of egg coal. I began taking it out, egg by egg, at first with my fingers and then with the tongs from the dining-room fireplace. And when the woman idly questioned me as to what I was going to do down cellar with the tongs, I bit my lips.

To the man who runs it (an absurd term as applied to a thing that has no legs and weighs several tons) the furnace is his first thought in the morning and his last thought at night. His calendar has but two seasons—winter, when the furnace is going, and summer, when the furnace is out. But in summer his thoughts are naturally more philosophical. He sees how profoundly this recent invention (which he is not at the time running) has changed man's attitude toward nature.

I am, of course, not referring to those furnaces which are endowed with more than the average human intelligence; those superfurnaces which are met with in the advertisements, which shake themselves down, shovel their own coal, carry and sift their own ashes, regulate their own drafts, and, if they do not actually order and pay for their own coal, at least consume it as carefully as if they did.

With a furnace like mine a man experiences all the emotions of which he is capable. He loves, he hates, he admires, he despises, he grieves, he exults. There have been times when I have felt like patting my furnace; and again, times when I have slammed his little door and spoken words to him far, far hotter than the fire that smouldered and refused to burn in his bowels. I judge from what I have read that

taming a wild animal must be a good deal like taming a furnace, with one important exception: the wild-animal-tamer never loses his temper or the beast would kill him; but a furnace, fortunately for suburban mortality, cannot kill its tamer.

When his furnace happens to be good-natured, however, a man will often find the bedtime hour with it pleasant and even enjoyable. He descends, humming or whistling, to the cellar; and the subsequent shaking and shovelling is, after all, no more than a healthy exercise which he would not otherwise take and which will make him sleep better. He is friendly with this rotund, coal-eating giant; he regards it almost like a big baby which he is putting to bed —or, at least, he *might* so regard it if putting a baby to bed was one of his recognized pleasures.

But, oh, what a difference in the morning! He awakes in the dark, startled perhaps from some pleasant dream by the wild alarm-m-m-m of a clock under his pillow; and outside the snug island of warmth on which he lies, the Universe stretches away in every direction, above, below, and on every side of him, cold, dreary, and unfit for human habitation, to and beyond the remotest star. In that cold Universe how small he is!—how warm and how weak! Instantly he thinks of the furnace, and the remotest star seems near by comparison. The thought of getting up and going down cellar seems as unreal as the thought of getting up and going to meet the sun at that pale streak which, through his easterly window, heralds the reluctant coming of another day. Yet he knows that he *must,* and that eventually he *will,* get up. In vain he tells himself how splendid, how invigorating will be the plunge *from his*

warm bed right into the fresh, brisk, hygienic morning air.

The fresh, brisk, hygienic morning air does not appeal to him. Unwillingly he recalls a line in the superfurnace advertisement,—"Get up warm and cosey,"—and helplessly wishes that *he* had such a furnace. "Like Andrew Carnegie!" he adds bitterly. At that moment he would anarchistically assassinate Andrew, provided he could do it without getting up. Nevertheless—he gets up! He puts on—"Curse it, *where* is that sleeve?"—the bath-robe and slippers that have been all night cooling for him, and starts on his lonely journey through the tomblike silence. Now, if ever, is the time to hum, but there is not a hum in him: down, down, down he goes to the cellar and peeks with dull hope through the familiar little door. "Good morning, Fire." He shakes, he shovels, he opens drafts and manipulates dampers. And the Furnace, impassive, like a Buddha holding up the house with as many arms as an octopus, seems to be watching him with a grave yet idle interest. Which is all the more horrible because it has no face.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

Most people who have had anything to do with a furnace will find Ralph Bergengren's experiences much like their own. Only to them these experiences did not seem funny. Perhaps there are two ways of taking unpleasant things in general: to take them as grievances, or to take them as a joke. It is a fortunate thing to be able to see the humorous side of an unpleasant situation.

After reading Bergengren's essay, can you recall an experience of your own which had its funny side, though it seemed

anything but funny at the time? Write about it. Or here are other subjects:

Janitors I Have Known.
An Open Fireplace.
The Friendly Stove.
The Unfriendly Radiator.
Is It Warm Enough for You?

The part of this essay that tells of the author's dislike to get out of bed suggests a delightful little paper by Leigh Hunt called "On Getting Up on Cold Mornings." It is found in the collection *Types of the Essay*. Another humorous bit you will enjoy is Mark Twain's "New England Weather," in the book called *Tom Sawyer, Detective*. If you can't find either of these, look in the library under 817, where the books on American humor are together, arranged alphabetically by authors. Under A you ought to find George Ade: two of his best books are *Fables in Slang* and *People You Know*. Under B you should find other books by Bergengren, such as *The Perfect Gentleman* and *The Seven Ages of Man*. Under D are the books of "Mr. Dooley," the pen name of Finley Peter Dunne, who uses Irish dialect to say things that are not only richly humorous but that strike home with their truth. From *Mr. Dooley in Peace and War*, his first book, to *Mr. Dooley on Making a Will* they form, like Ade's *Fables in Slang*, a racy comment upon American life. Under H you will surely find three books by Oliver Wendell Holmes: *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, and *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*. The *Autocrat* is the best of these. Then there is Artemus Ward, whose real name was Charles Farrar Browne: his lecture on "The Mormons" has many laughs in it. For those who care for humor with a marked literary tone, there is Samuel M. Crothers. He wrote some twenty books; two of the best are *The Gentle Reader* and *Among Friends*. Or you may like the keen thrusts of Agnes Repplier. Try her *Essays in Miniature* or *In the Dozy Hours*.

THE LAUNDRY PROBLEM

STEPHEN LEACOCK

STEPHEN LEACOCK

Stephen Leacock has written an account of himself as a preface to his book *Sunshine Sketches*. From this we learn that he was born in England in 1869, but came to Canada in childhood. He went to school and college in Toronto, graduating at the University of Toronto. He says: "At the university I spent my entire time in the acquisition of languages, living, dead, and half dead, and knew nothing of the outside world. Very soon after graduation I had forgotten the languages, and found myself intellectually bankrupt." He taught school for some unhappy years, then went to the University of Chicago to study economics and political science. He took the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. He adds: "The meaning of this degree is that the recipient of instruction is examined for the last time in his life, and is pronounced completely full. After this, no new ideas can be imparted to him." Doctor Leacock, to give him his new title, joined the faculty of McGill University, Montreal, and soon became head of the department of economics and political science. But evidently there was something in him which economics and political science could not satisfy, for he soon began writing humorous sketches for *Life* and other magazines. These were collected into a book called *Literary Lapses*. On its publication readers in Canada and the United States hailed the appearance of a new humorist. Book after book has appeared since then; among the best are *Nonsense Novels, Sunshine Sketches, Behind the Beyond, Frenzied Fiction, Winnowed Wisdom,* and *My Discovery of England.*

THE LAUNDRY PROBLEM*

A Yearning for the Good Old Days of the Humble Washerwoman

STEPHEN LEACOCK

A long time ago, thirty or forty years ago, there used to exist a humble being called a Washerwoman. It was her simple function to appear at intervals with a huge basket, carry away soiled clothes, and bring them back as snow-white linen.

The washerwoman is gone now. Her place is taken by the Amalgamated Laundry Company. She is gone but I want her back.

The washerwoman, in fact and in fiction, was supposed to represent the bottom end of everything. She could just manage to exist. She was the last word. Now the Amalgamated Laundry Company uses hydro-electric power, has an office like a bank, and delivers its goods out of a huge hearse driven by a chauffeur in livery. But I want that humble woman back.

In the old days any woman deserted and abandoned in the world took in washing. When all else failed there was at least that. Any woman who wanted to show her independent spirit and force of character threatened to take in washing. It was the last resort of a noble mind. In many of the great works of fiction the heroine's mother almost took in washing.

Women whose ancestry went back to the crusades *very*

*From *Winnowed Wisdom*, by Stephen Leacock, copyrighted by Dodd, Mead and Company.

nearly, though never quite, started to wash when the discovery of the missing will saved them from the suds. But nowadays if a woman exclaimed, "What shall I do? I am alone in the world! I will open an Amalgamated Laundry!"—it would not sound the same.

The operation of the old system—as I recall it from the days of forty years ago—was very simple. The washerwoman used to call and take away my shirt and my collar and while she washed them I wore my other shirt and my other collar. When she came back we changed over. She always had one and I had one. In those days any young man in a fair position needed two shirts.

Where the poor washerwoman was hopelessly simple was that she never destroyed or injured the shirt. She never even thought to bite a piece out with her teeth. When she brought it back it looked softer and better than ever. It never occurred to her to tear out one of the sleeves. If she broke out a button in washing, she humbly sewed it on again.

When she ironed the shirt it never occurred to the simple soul to burn a brown mark right across it. The woman lacked imagination. In other words, modern industrialism was in its infancy.

I have never witnessed at first hand the processes of a modern incorporated laundry company using up-to-date machinery. But I can easily construct in my imagination a vision of what is done when a package of washing is received. The shirts are first sorted out and taken to an expert who rapidly sprinkles them with sulphuric acid.

They then go to the coloring room where they are dipped in a solution of yellow stain. From this they pass to

the machine-gun room where holes are shot in them and from there by an automatic carrier to the hydraulic tearing room where the sleeves are torn out. After that they are squeezed absolutely flat under enormous pressure which puts them into such a shape that the buttons can all be ripped up at a single scrape by an expert button-ripper.

The last process is altogether handwork and accounts, I am informed, for the heavy cost. A good button-ripper with an expert knowledge of the breaking strain of material, easily earns fifty dollars a day. But the work is very exacting, as not a single button is expected to escape his eye. Of late the big laundries are employing new chemical methods, such as mustard gas, tear bombs, and star shells.

Collars, I understand, are treated in the same way, though the process varies a little according as the aim is to produce the Fuzzled Edge Finish or the Split Side Slit. The general idea, of course, in any first-class laundry, is to see that no shirt or collar ever comes back twice. If it should happen to do so, it is sent at once to the Final Destruction Department, who put gun cotton under it and blow it into six bits. It is then labelled *"damaged"* and sent home in a special conveyance with an attendant in the morning.

Had the poor washerwoman kept a machine-gun and a little dynamite, she could have made a fortune. But she didn't know it. In the old days a washerwoman washed a shirt for ten-twelfths of a cent—or ten cents a dozen pieces. The best laundries, those which deny all admission to their offices and send back their laundry under an armed guard, now charge one dollar to wash a shirt, with a special rate of twelve dollars a dozen.

On the same scale the washerwoman's wages would be

multiplied by a hundred and twenty. She really represented in value an income of fifty dollars a year. Had it been known, she could have been incorporated and dividends picked off her like huckleberries.

Now that I think of it, she was worth even more than that. With the modern laundry a shirt may be worn twice, for one day each time. After that it is blown up. And it costs four dollars to buy a new one. In the old days a shirt lasted till a man outgrew it. As a man approached middle life he found, with a certain satisfaction, that he had outgrown his shirt. He had to spend seventy-five cents on a new one, and that one lasted till he was buried in it.

Had some poor woman only known enough to pick up one of these shirts and bite the neck out of it, she might have started something really big.

But even when all this has been said there remains more yet. In the old days if you had a complaint to make to the washerwoman you said it to her straight out. She was *there*. And she heard the complaint and sneaked away with tears in her eyes to her humble home where she read the Bible and drank gin.

But now if you have a complaint to make to an Amalgamated Laundry Corporation, you can't find it. There is no use complaining to the chauffeur in livery. He never saw a shirt in his life.

There is no use going to the office. All you find there are groups of lady employees sheltered behind a cast-iron grating. They never saw your shirt. Don't ask them. They have their office work and in the evening they take extension lectures on the modern drama. They wouldn't know a shirt if they saw it.

Nor can you write to the company. I speak here of what I know, for I have tried to lay a complaint before a laundry company in writing, and I know the futility of it. Here is the letter I wrote:

To the Board of Directors,
The Amalgamated Universal Laundry Company
Gentlemen:—

I wish you would try to be a little more careful with my shirt. I mean the pink one. I think you put a little more starch in the neck last time than you intended and it all seems stuck together.

Very faithfully yours,

———

But the only answer I got was a communication in the following terms:

Dear Sir,

Folio 110,615. Department 0412. Received February 19th 9.26 A. M. Read March 19, 8.23 A. M. Sent down April 19th 4:01 A. M. Sent up May 19th 2 A. M.

We beg to inform you that your communication as above will be laid before the shareholders at the next general meeting. In answering kindly indicate folio, department, street, age and occupation. No complaints received under names or in words.

Yours,
Folio 0016.

After that I felt it was hopeless to go on. My only chance for the future is that I may get to know some beautiful rich woman and perhaps her husband will run away and leave

her weeping and penniless and drinking gin, and then I will appear in the doorway and will say, "Dry your tears, dear, dear friend; there is prosperity for you yet; you shall wash my shirt."

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

These two essays suggest the question, What is humor? It has been defined as a perception of incongruity, which means a putting together of two things or ideas that do not belong together. For example, if a baker gets angry at a customer and hits him with his fist, that is not humorous; if he hits him with a custard pie, everybody laughs. The ideas of anger and a blow with the fist go naturally together, but anger and a custard pie are incongruous, so combining them makes humor. Test one or two of the humorous bits in Leacock, and see whether this element of incongruity is present.

Again, G. K. Chesterton, himself a noted English humorist, says that "Humour always has in it some of the idea of the humorist himself being at a disadvantage and caught in the entanglements and contradictions of human life." Is this true of Bergengren's essay? Of Leacock's?

Another writer says that the characteristic quality of American humor is exaggeration. Is this true of the two essays given?

Suggested Essay Subjects

My Favorite Humorist.
People Who Have No Sense of Humor.
Humor in the Movies.
Humor in the Comic Strips.
What Is Humor?
A Comparison of *Punch* and *Life*.

If you like this essay, get the book *Winnowed Wisdom* from which it is taken and read more of Leacock. If that book is not in, take anything else by Leacock; you can't go wrong.

The essayists suggested for reading in the note to Bergengren were all American. But England has its humorous writers too. One of the most famous is Charles Lamb, author of *Essays of Elia.* If you have not read the "Essay on Roast Pig," you have missed something. Then there is Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland,* a delight to readers of any age. A very entertaining writer of the present day is A. A. Milne, author of *Not That It Matters* and *If I May.* Another contemporary writer is Edward V. Lucas, author of various entertaining volumes such as *Adventures and Enthusiasms, Fireside and Sunshine, Giving and Receiving, Loiterer's Harvest.* A little more difficult but very brilliant are the essays of G. K. Chesterton. Some of his books are *The Uses of Adversity, Alarms and Excursions, Tremendous Trifles,* and *All Things Considered.* Then there is the Scotch journalist Robert Lynd, author of *The Pleasures of Ignorance, The Blue Lion, The Peal of Bells,* and *The Money Box.* If you cannot find any of these books, perhaps you can get a copy of *Punch,* the famous English humorous paper.

WINTER BIRDS

JOHN C. VAN DYKE

JOHN C. VAN DYKE

John C. van Dyke, who wrote *The Meadows,* from which "Winter Birds" is taken, lives at New Brunswick, N. J., and the meadows he writes about lie opposite his house on the Raritan River. He was born at New Brunswick in 1856 and has been for forty years professor of the history of art in Rutgers University. He has written many books on art; one of the best known is *How to Judge of a Picture;* others deal with Dutch, French, English, Italian, and American masters of painting. He has travelled a great deal and has known every land, having been around the world several times. Nature is his great delight, and he has always been writing about it. His nature books include *The Desert, The Opal Sea, The Open Spaces, The Mountains, Grand Canyon of the Colorado,* and *The Meadows.*

In reply to a question about his method of writing, he replied as follows:

"If one has something to say, he need not worry about the manner of saying it. It will say itself. Learning to write something about nothing is the cause of so many dreary stupid books being put out each year. Whatever I have had to say I have tried to say it in the fewest and the simplest words—words that a child may understand. That is my notion of good style."

Professor van Dyke's writings have brought him many honors. He is a member of the New Jersey State Board of Education, a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters and of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The latter organization is limited to fifty members, chosen from the most eminent living writers of America.

WINTER BIRDS*

JOHN C. VAN DYKE

THE storms that come to the meadows from the east are usually the outer edges of great whirls moving up the Atlantic coast from the Gulf of Mexico. The whirls move from right to left and New Jersey generally gets the back-draft of them—the draft which we call the east wind. These storms mean gales and rain but usually neither snow nor cold. The low gray clouds drift in, rank after rank, in unending sequence, the full tide pushes back the river water until it overflows the banks and floods the meadows, and, winging up the swollen waterway, often come flocks of black ducks, sheldrakes, redheads, canvasbacks. Sometimes at evening a half-dozen killdeer go crying through the dusk, or a great cloud of starlings, blown down from New England, drops wearily into a grove of pines, or a troop of herring gulls from the Lower Bay moves inward to get out of the gale.

The gulls come far up the river, moving with the wind on easy, lazy wing, their heads turning to left and right, and their bright eyes ever on the lookout for possible provender. When some auspicious beach or bar or floe of ice, with other arrived gulls upon it, is reached, they wheel and hover and perhaps drop quietly down to it. There, like white-painted decoys, they stand facing the wind and rain, or walk about in a listless manner, or make small circles in the air and alight again. They are quite at home

*From *The Meadows*, by John C. van Dyke, copyrighted by Charles Scribner's Sons.

in an ordinary gale, but they do not like a big blow. It rumples their feathers, disturbs their gliding and sailing, and, worst of all, it interferes somewhat with food gathering.

The coast and the harbors where refuse is plentiful are the usual hunting-grounds of the gulls. But they come up the river in fair weather as well as in foul, for curiosity perhaps as well as shelter, and once arrived they do a deal of waddling, wading, and paddling about the bars and shores, with no apparent object in view more than a possibility of food. Occasionally a passing string of black ducks or sheldrakes will glide down to them with a swish into the water, thinking possibly that the gulls have spied out a safe resting place, or have found something to eat. Birds, even though not of a feather, will often decoy, or draw down from the air, other birds by their position or actions on a feeding-ground. The herd instinct is perhaps less compelling, though occasionally again there will be an attempt at fraternizing between different species, such as a lone gull swimming with ducks or a lone duck standing on a bar with gulls. But the intruder always keeps a little aloof, as though suspicious of attack. Frequently a duck will make a rush through the water at an unwelcome gull or a gull will make a lunge at a passing duck, but small injury results in either case.

There is little fierce fighting among birds, except in the breeding season. Then the gull screams and strikes with beak and wing, while his mate on the nest lifts an approving head, but at other times he does not care to ruffle his white and pearl-gray plumage. He looks after his comfort and his crop and is reasonably discreet. With food in

view he will follow an ocean steamer a hundred miles out to sea and then turn back. He does not care for too much wind and water. The petrel and the shearwater hold title to the open sea; and the gull does not dispute it. He goes home to the shore, where he can get rid of heavy winds by retreating inland and sitting still.

But the gulls and ducks and crying killdeer are wide wanderers, and are winter birds only as occasion offers, whereas the more common crows are always with us. Throughout the winter and in all weathers the crows keep moving on the wing. Even in a big blow half a dozen of them may often be seen fighting up against it, sinking and rising, veering and tacking, but slowly moving forward, in the teeth of the wind. They are rather clumsy fliers, but are strong, persistent, patient, and travel many miles in a day from forest roost to open feeding-ground and back. They are not easily diverted on these morning and evening flights. When flying low you may turn them aside by waving at them, but they merely circle you and then resume the line of flight. At other times, when prowling or hunting, they fly slowly and keep a sharp lookout on everything below. A gull on a bar or bank, making a fish breakfast, will attract instant attention, and half a dozen passing crows will quickly drop to the anticipated feast. They soon stampede the gull by cawing at him and then proceed to fight among themselves for what remains of the fish. This is evidently considered a fair game and a good joke among crows, but when in summer matters are reversed, when the crows have found some delectable dead dog, and a huge southern buzzard drops down and scatters them, then the outrage is more than outrageous. They quickly form an outer circle

at a safe distance and caw themselves hoarse at the intruder. Occasionally they rise explosively, wheeling and dipping at the enemy, but he pays little attention to them.

The crows are the coyotes of the air. They have not sufficient courage to do their own dragging down and killing, but they stand ready to profit by anything that is brought down by a killer. If in large numbers sometimes they will urge on one another to an attack from behind. One winter day in going through timber I heard a commotion of crows on the farther edge of the timber. On approaching quietly I discovered some twenty-five or thirty crows, in a circle on the snow about a great horned owl. They had him at bay, but he was fighting them off satisfactorily. None of them cared to come within reach of his beak and claws. But, unfortunately for him, when he started to fly, the crows at once seized the opportunity to rise above him, dart down on him, and strike him in the back. I could distinctly hear the thump of the blows resounding from his back and see some of his feathers drifting on the wind. They would have worried him to death had he not darted into a thicket where the crows could not manœuvre.

The crow-mob, as a mob, may prove dangerous, but when in summer the single crow goes lumbering across country and passes the nest of some kingbird or blackbird or robin, he is far from brave. Any one of the smaller birds puts him to his speed to get out of the way. The vicious attack of the kingbird makes him roll and lurch like a ship in a storm, and his returning snap of the bill is always clumsy and futile. He is a swashbuckler, cawing much but fighting little.

There is nothing unusual or strange about gulls or crows

or ducks or owls. They are very common feathered folk, to be found in every country, and attract little more attention than domestic fowl along the roadside: and yet if one looks intently at them they will reveal a special quality of pattern or texture or color than which nothing is more rare or more beautiful. "As black as a crow" is a comparison of common use, but do we always comprehend the quality of that black? It is not a coal-black, but a sheeny intense purple-black that is found only in plumage. The crow blackbird, or purple grackle, has it even more markedly than the crow, but not the other blackbirds. As for its texture, nothing in closely woven silk quite matches it, and yet silk comes the nearest to the feather's surface. It is a wonderful black.

Similar qualities and textures are to be found in the whites and grays of the gulls, or in the white of the snow owl, or the patterned plumage of the barn owl. What astonishing whites and grays! And what strangely beautiful designs! All the feathered tribe have the gift of beauty—whether for their own protection or their partner's admiration or the glory of God matters not. The poor little English sparrows that in cold winter mornings keep watching the kitchen door for bread crumbs, are considered the rowdies of the race, and yet just when, where, and how have you seen their gray-brown jackets duplicated in pattern or in color?

Quite as common as the sparrows are the starlings. They are now declared a nuisance. In the autumn they gather in gangs of hundreds or thousands and move in small clouds from place to place. As they pass over your head you hear the rush of their wings like the sound of the wind in the

pines. Cold weather does not bother them and the coldest mornings will find them about public buildings where the ampelopsis grows, feeding upon the blue berries of that creeper. They are not particular about food. A bare or grass-grown bit of ground will often be darkened by half a thousand of them, rooting with their bills like little pigs among the grasses for a chance seed, a berry, or a dried insect. It is astonishing how active they are in quest of food. It is their one insistent demand. Yet safety is never neglected. There are always plenty of lookouts, and the slightest signal will send the whole flock as a unit into the tree-tops. There they talk in a low chatter, sometimes whistle a mellow note, preen themselves, and watch for the next move of their fellows. Presently they begin drifting back to the ground in relays and in a few minutes the whole band is rooting in the grass again.

You hardly realize the beauty of the starling until you see him close to view. One winter day I picked up one lying on the snow, and in the white cold sunlight the bronze, buff, and iridescent purple of his plumage was something as precious as the coloring of the peacock or the ring-necked pheasant. And what a contrast in that yellow beak and the red legs! He was not dead, and his bright eyes shone like black diamonds as he looked me over. I took him home, thawed him out, and saw him fly rapidly away as though from some sort of a bad dream.

THE STARLING

A starling! Just a starling!
Pointed tail and spotted feather
With his bronze-brown wings a-whir

Through the eager winter weather—
Who shall say he is not splendid
Though by thousands close attended!

A starling! Just a starling!
With his solemn little twitter
At the window in the morning
When the snow is all a-glitter—
As he turns to gaze at you
Does he look the parvenu?

A starling! Just a starling!
Listed with the English sparrow
As a hoodlum in a class
With the goldenrod and yarrow;
But Creation knows no listing
And the class is man's insisting.

In the cold days of late January and early February, when the afternoon sun is driving long, low shafts across the snow, I often stop to look at the lilac and heliotrope shadows cast by the standing stalks of thistle, joepye weed, or aster. The lines of the stem shadows are so beautifully precise and they blur out in the upper branches into something so mysteriously and delicately vague that I am always reminded of Twachtman's wonderful drawing. He had studied the shadows on snow, both in line and color, so much that he had made of them a *genre* of his own. How beautifully he drew trees and banks and hill lines, snow forms and cloud edges and water surfaces! Even in his early days he was devoted to delicacy of edge in stalk and stem, but that was merely preliminary to his later work upon snow landscapes. This was his final and most absorbing passion.

He talked it out to me one winter afternoon in the Westchester Hills, and I have never forgotten what he said nor his enthusiastic manner of saying it. Perhaps I have unconsciously been fonder of the snow landscape by reason of what he pointed out to me that winter day. At least, I like to think so.

All bare or dead forms under sunlight cast mysterious shadows on the snow—rose bushes, small hawthorns, young beeches and locusts, as well as wild rice, flags, and cat-tails. Very beautiful are the shadows of some of the tall meadow-grasses, particularly the millet and what we as children called "wild oats." To these grasses come, looking for seeds, the song sparrows. These hardy little birds often stay with us all winter, and even when driven by extreme weather a few hundred miles to the south they return in February. They have a very pretty way of flying against the tall grasses, catching hold of the stalks with their little feet, and, by the weight of their bodies, bending them down to the snow. It is a graceful performance carried on with fluttering wing and a gradual bending down of the stalk. The bird quite understands the best method of procedure, and while holding down the stalk he knows precisely how to get at the seeds in the dead top. He chirps over it somewhat, but sings a song only when the days get a little longer and warmer.

A brave bird is the song sparrow! And in his gray-brown coat, holding down the golden stalk of the "wild oats," with his heliotrope shadow cast on the snow, he is a beautiful bird. One would travel far before seeing a more delicate color combination than is shown in this common winter scene. That it appears too often in sentimental form on

Christmas cards is very true, but the moonlight landscape suffers quite as badly, with neither scene responsible for the distortion. On the contrary, if we turn to Japanese art we shall find both the moonlight and the sparrow objects of great beauty. And how well the Japanese give the values of neutral tones—grays and mauves and pallid blues! The strong reds or blues or greens of nature are more readily comprehended but have infinitely less distinction.

Always the delicate tones are the more numerous. They usually make up the great background upon which a bright note will glitter as a high-light. And even without a dark background a gay color is usually a striking note. A cardinal grosbeak catches the eye instantly where the brown song sparrow or the slate-and-silver gray junco goes unnoticed. Occasionally the cardinal is seen in our snow landscape, but not often. He usually goes as far south as the Big Smoky Mountains, where, in the spring, he is one of the earliest to start singing. His song begins with a whistle, as though calling for attention, and ends with a "pretty, pretty, pretty!" as though complimenting himself. Of course he is conspicuous, and people look at him as they might at a red sunset, but I am not sure that for all his brilliant coloring he is anything more than just "pretty." The junco in his silver-gray is more distinguished, more nearly unique. You will not find the match for that gray except in the hues of certain rain clouds. Nothing on the earth is quite like it. Yet so neutral is it that we perhaps notice the bird only when, in flight, he shows that white tail feather. "Snow bird" the children still call him, and they believe he comes only with falling snow. The belief is not more unfounded than many held by older people. The junco is always with us, but his

slate-gray back becomes conspicuous only upon a white snow background.

He is one of the most hardy of the winter birds, spending most of his days on the edge of a wood, hunting over decayed trunks and branches for insects, or open spaces for seeds, and apparently unaffected by cold weather. At night he takes to cover for protection from owls rather than for warmth. On the farms he creeps into corn shocks near the top of the shock, and occasionally makes port under a hayrick; but oftener he drops into some opening in a bunch of grass around which the snow has drifted, or else creeps into a thick little cedar where he cannot be seen and even the wind will not find him. In big blows he takes to the woods for cover. All the small birds do that. Up from the meadows on the eastern bench of the river there is in one place a thick growth of small oaks and red cedars, and there, in severe storms, I often find the birds gathered. The juncos keep along the outer edge, but the sparrows, bluejays, and stray robins seek the interior, where the storm goes by overhead with a hum and the lower regions are left undisturbed. Often in the first storms of early winter there will be flocks of wax-wings temporarily abiding there, with cardinals, nuthatches, or delayed bluebirds, but no grackles, blackbirds, or starlings.

And no downy or hairy woodpeckers. They do not go into cover from storms, but in all weathers are out tapping, hammering, and drilling the trees for insects. They are the hardiest of the hardy and need no one's pity as they hitch themselves up the bare trunks of winter. They care nothing for snow, sleet, or freezing weather. With a minimum of food they are quite able to fight off the elements. The terrific

pounding of their bills, their everlasting hitch, hitch, hitch up the trees, with their tail feathers used for a brace and a stay, are sufficient to keep their blood circulating. And of all the winter birds they are the ones that enjoy most that lump of suet in a wire box put out of winter mornings by the bird-lover. They will hold by the cage and peck through the mesh as long as a particle of suet remains.

The chickadees are not such good foragers. On winter mornings they come into the syringa bush near my window and sit humped up in a downy ball, looking in at the window with their little beadlike eyes, as though they expected breakfast. They wipe their bills on the bare branch under them a dozen times a minute, back and forth like a mower's whetstone on a scythe, again as though preparing for breakfast. Very charming, very confiding, innocent little birds are the chickadees. They are small and look perhaps frail, but they have stout resistance powers, and go through the cold waves of winter better than those that spread larger wings to the gale.

The meadow-lark (he does not belong to the lark family) will often brave out the whole winter, living in the open fields and in February singing a song that is clear, penetrating, and quite thrilling. Even when the snow is too deep in the fields for food-gathering you will find him on the open roads and along the southern slopes of banks, picking a living, and not grumbling or sulking, but singing as though perfectly happy. Of course, he is beautiful and much admired because of his gay yellow breast with its black spots. Like the cardinal grosbeak, he belongs to the category of things obvious, but he is not the less beautiful for that. His note in the lengthening days of February seems to por-

tend the coming spring and is a promise of June days in the timothy and clover.

Along the brooks and about the southern exposure of cut banks where water trickles, there will often be found patches of growing grass and watercress, though February snows lie deep. Any underground water rising in springs to the surface is warm enough in winter to keep the grass green upon its edges. Such a spring hole in winter is almost as interesting to watch as a desert water-hole in midsummer. For here come the smaller birds (such as the sparrows, looking for food, or, even in very cold weather, taking quick baths in the shallow water), and with them many another denizen of the winter woods, prowling about or merely drawn by curiosity. In the snow are the tracks of rabbits, squirrels, muskrats, weasels, quail, pheasants, crows, bluejays, and, if you approach the water carefully, the heads of frogs with only the noses and eyes visible, will be seen protruding through the weedy surface. But a severe cold snap drives the frogs and the turtles to a mud retreat at the bottom of the basin, and even causes the green grass to curl and blacken. All the winter through you will find under the leaves the green of the myrtle, and spreading down the banks the brighter green of the honeysuckle, but both greens go blackish after a hard freeze. The limit of endurance is reached before the zero mark.

February, along the benches and upon the meadows, is the coldest month of all. The snows are deep and cry out when an old-fashioned wagon goes over them, or your foot grinds them. They are perhaps piled up and drifted over banks and gullies, heaped into fantastic forms along the fences, blown into waves across the open fields. The ponds

and streams are frozen over. Even the river is a choke of crumpled ice, and from the small patches of open water a vapor goes up that soon turns into floating hoar-frost. All the marshlands where the muskrat makes his house and, in summer, the rail bird, the coot, and the bittern paddle about, are now accessible. The boy skaters go on exploring expeditions up the little waterways, where they try to stun the small fishes and turtles through the ice, and where they make fires in the reeds for warmth, and perhaps go home with frost-bitten ears or fingers. A wind sings down the valley that makes the pine needles hum in a high key and the rabbit shiver in his form. The owl, for all his feathers, is a-cold. He creeps into the hollow of a tree or settles down into some sheltered crotch, where he can snuggle up to the trunk and keep from being seen.

I am not sure that he does not get some warmth out of the trunk. Certainly, aside from being sheltered from the wind, the interior of the forest is always warmer than the open fields. The trees are dormant in winter, but not dead. They continue to give off some warmth. When the snow melts it does so first along the branches and about the trunks of trees. Still, in spite of any warmth that the sap may possibly furnish, the trees have their shivers and freezes. The days when the spring holes and streams are frozen, and the water gurgles faintly under the ice, and the pines and cedars hold frozen snow in their arms, are not the happy days for any form of life.

And for some of the birds and beasts cold weather brings its real tragedies. Food is scarce, the cold is ever depressing vitality, the enemy is gaunt with hunger, the cover for concealment is slight. It is sometimes almost pathetic to see the

ring-necked pheasant trying to hide in some blackberry tangle, or under a small bent cedar, with its top frozen down in the snow. He is aware that he is not more than half-concealed, and, hearing your foot-crunch in the snow, he starts to run and fly long before you can come up to him. At dusk I often see them flying down from the benches, where they have been seeking food, to the meadows, where, under some heavy tussock of grass or fallen tree, they gather for the night. Often enough on the frozen snow there are evidences in feathers and blood that some huge owl has made a kill and the crows have finished what he left.

The crows go, too. Occasionally one is found with spread wings upon the snow, but no bird or beast seems responsible for the death, and only the rats and skunks come to the banquet. The smaller birds, such as the larks, sparrows, and juncos, meet with accidents, and they, too, succumb to adverse conditions, but their great enemy, the sparrow-hawk, is not usually present in winter. Sometimes the lesser owls get them. Once down and on the ground, by design or accident, they are soon devoured. Skunks, weasels, foxes are forever patrolling the woods and fields, and their keen noses soon locate anything crippled or dead.

But Nature cares nothing for tragedies. She equips for life and leaves the product to fight as best it can. In the end she means that it shall fail and be superseded by a newer product. In her Plan death is quite as well-ordered and desirable as life. All shall go and the new shall come out of the old. Wherefore she sorrows not, stops not, but goes her way singing a song while the world puts on a new morning face and the Plan is eternally repeated, the species eternally renewed.

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

This essay, full of the sights seen by a lover of nature and a close observer, may serve to check up your own knowledge.

What kinds of ducks does he mention in the first paragraph? How many of them are you familiar with?

What does he say about the crow as a fighter? Can you confirm this from your own observation?

Read carefully the description of the crow's plumage. Had you ever noticed it?

What is the author's feeling about the starling? This bird has recently become rather common in the eastern part of the United States, and some people think it will spread as the English sparrow has done.

What is said about the color of shadows cast by weeds on snow? (Page 253.) Is this true?

What other passages in the essay show that the author is a close observer?

What have you gained from this essay?

What advice about writing does Professor van Dyke give? (See sketch of his life.)

A list of essay subjects drawn from nature will be found at the end of the next essay.

If you like essays dealing with nature, there is good hunting for you in the library. One of the most companionable nature lovers is John Burroughs. Try his *Wake-Robin* or *Winter Sunshine* or *Signs and Seasons,* or *Riverby.* If you already know his books, take out a volume by Dallas Lore Sharp, *Face of the Fields* or *The Hills of Hingham.* Or there is the other van Dyke, Henry, whose *Days Off* and *Fisherman's Luck* and *Little Rivers* every reader enjoys. Frank Bolles's *Land of the Lingering Snow,* or C. C. Abbott's *Days Out of Doors* or Bradford Torrey's *A Rambler's Lease* may be lurking on your library shelves. And above all, if you have not read William Beebe, delay no longer; get his *Jungle Peace* or *The Edge of the Jungle* and see how fascinating a scientist can be when he has the imagination of a poet.

TREMBLING EARTH

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.*

Samuel Scoville, Jr. (1876–), a prominent Philadelphia lawyer, has found his greatest interest in outdoor life and has long made a study of birds and animals in different parts of the world. He owns a cabin in the Pine-Barrens, about thirty miles from Philadelphia; a hundred-and-fifty-year-old house and a hundred acres of wild land in Maine; and a tiny farm in the Berkshires. To one of these havens he is wont to escape with his two boys and little daughter, who delight to share his adventures and never tire of his fascinating stories.

He boasts of four hobbies: scribbling, books, boys, and birds. For the first of these, a hundred or so stories, essays, articles, and poems in the periodicals of the day, and various books are evidence. Apparently, like all true artists, he is dissatisfied with his work, yet he cannot stop. On trains, late at night, between cases in court, in vacations, on holidays, and during odd moments, he must be always scribbling. Of his other hobbies, he says:

"Next come boys. I have always liked to play and work and talk and tramp with boys and since leaving college have organized and run a dozen or so boys' clubs and bands and troops and classes.

"Next come books. My house, my office, and my camp are stacked with books and books and books and still more books. To me they are one of the greatest pleasures of life.

"Last of all come birds, which to me mean all out-of-doors. Let me urge you all to get out into the open. With a smattering knowledge of out-of-door subjects, I spend all my holiday time in the open air. I have sought and found an eagle's nest. I have walked forty-two miles in the snow through the mountains in a day and a half to see the first raven's nest ever found in Pennsylvania. I have travelled a thousand miles through Canada, bird-nesting. One year two of us caught and photo-

*This sketch is reprinted by permission from *Current Literature*.

graphed and described practically every variety of snake in eastern America. There is a bog in New Jersey full of orchids, a rattlesnake den in Connecticut, a mountain full of rare birds among the Poconos, a hidden troutbrook in the Berkshires, and a host of other interesting places that I visit every year. In the depths of the Pine-Barrens on the brownest, sweetest, crookedest stream in the world, I have a canoe and a little cabin full of books and fireplaces. There I escape for a day or so now and then at all times of the year."

Among the escapades of his youth, he confesses to have explored a gypsy cave; to have cut his initials on the top of the steeple of the Congregational church in his home town, Stamford; to have been shot by a burglar; to have had his leg broken by a bucking bronco; and to have barely escaped drowning while rowing across the Sound in a gale.

His college days were spent at Yale. After graduation he practised law in New York for a number of years, and then in Philadelphia where he now has his office.

Among his interesting nature studies are *Wild Folk, Boy Scouts in the Wilderness, Man and Beast, Runaway Days.*

TREMBLING EARTH*

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

I

THERE are different ways of meeting a fiftieth birthday. Some substitute auction for action. Others stop eating the things which they like and live mostly on spinach until death relieves them of their sufferings.

"If I must be dragged into old age, it shall be backwards," wrote Montaigne—and I agree with him and am going to set my heels in deep and hold back as long as possible against the grip of that toothless hag who at the last overthrows us all.

Accordingly, when I was invited to spend a week on a hidden island in the almost unknown depths of that great marsh which lies between Georgia and Florida, I promptly accepted.

The Seminole Indians, who once lived there, have christened those six hundred square miles of swamp "Okefinokee," which means in their tongue "Trembling Earth." It is there that the celebrated Suwanee River has its source, and there too can still be found the magnificent ivory-billed woodpecker, now nearly as rare as the passenger pigeon or the Carolina paroquet, and other birds and beasts unknown to everyday life. Moreover, the island which I was to visit was once a Seminole stronghold before that fierce tribe were

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driven down into the Everglades. Even now its mounds are occasionally visited by wanderers of that race who find their way back to the lost home of their ancestors.

A day and a night after the invitation, and I stood at the beginning of a long channel which stretched away into the mysterious depths of the marsh. As I stared at its shimmering length, there flowed into my blood that joy of the wilderness which so many times has come to me upon approaching some unexplored fastness of the wilds. A moment later and I was in another world where everything was strange and new.

The bleached grass of the banks showed a pale ochre against the copper-brown water, in which strange green and violet lights gleamed, like those one sees in the depths of a black opal. The crimson keys of the red maples were the color of shed blood against the towering cypresses, shrouded with Spanish moss, which gave a curious touch of melancholy to the landscape.

Patches of small lilies, pearl-white with a tinge of crimson,—"milk-and-wine," the country people call them,—and drifts of snowy violets, with sepia pencillings within their exquisite petals, showed here and there on the banks, which were laced with muscadine and bamboo vine. Little waves of perfume floated through the air from the butter-yellow blossoms of the wild jessamine, which resembles the false foxglove of the North and has a fragrance like that of no other flower.

Suddenly, from the marsh beside the canal, a white heron with slim black legs and a yellow bill took flight and flapped away like a great, snowy butterfly, and I recognized the American egret, which I had only occasionally seen as a

rare visitor in the North. Here these birds were abundant everywhere. Perched on the tops of the cypresses, or rising from the Swamp where they fed, they added a touch of almost unearthly beauty to the landscape.

Then, as we rounded the first bend in the stream, three great birds, shadow-gray in color, with naked reddish heads, round black eyes, and long legs and bills, flew across the canal ahead of us. Unlike the herons, which always fly with a kink in their necks, these birds had their necks stretched straight out, as were their legs, and they presented a curiously stiff, wooden appearance as they flew. They were like no other birds that I had ever seen, and I suddenly realized that I was looking for the first time at a sand-hill crane, not so rare as his larger and almost extinct brother, the whooping crane, but still scarce enough to be an event for most ornithologists. Later on I learned to know their loud trumpet note, *kuk-a-row-ow-ow,* rippling across the marsh like the call of some giant tree toad. The birds themselves were among the wariest of all the marsh folk, never alighting anywhere except on the ground, and with their wild alarm notes doing sentry duty for all of the wild folk near them.

After several hours on the canal we reached an osprey's nest, a cartload of sticks in the top of a towering cypress. There we left the tiny canal and, using a curious three-pronged pole, the "push-pole" of the Swamp, followed hidden waterways and secret marks through the very heart of the marsh, everywhere dotted with innumerable islets. Almost immediately I caught a glimpse of another bird strange to my Northern eyes, the anhinga, otherwise known as the water turkey or snake-bird. To me the adjective

which best describes that bird is "narrow." His back was long and slim, his tail, nearly a foot in length, seemed scarcely two inches wide, while his long attenuated black body gave him a strange, spearlike effect. The anhinga's conventional flight is three flaps and a soar. Usually when alarmed he circles up and up until a mere speck in the sky, but at other times the versatile bird will dive and swim under water like a fish.

Just beyond the first anhinga, my guide, a celebrated bear-hunter, Pungie Slaughter by name, lost for a time the winding, tangled waterway which he had been following like a clew through the maze of the Swamp, and we found ourselves confronted by a wall of shrouded cypresses. Zigzagging in and out between their trunks, we suddenly shot into a tiny, hidden lake, perhaps forty feet across, so encircled by the close-set trees that we never suspected its presence until we were floating on its smooth water. There it lay like a great aquamarine set in platinum, and it gleamed so lonely and lovely that I like to believe that no one else has ever seen it, save we two.

For a long time we floated in silence in the golden afternoon light that filtered through the ghost-gray Spanish moss. Then, as at last we reluctantly turned our boat toward the hidden entrance through which we had come, from the farther bank of that still, green pool a song bubbled out full of crystalline runs and trills, yet with a loud ringing sweetness in it which reminded me of the song of the Northern water thrush, as I have heard him sing in lonely forests from the tangle of roots of some overturned tree where he had made his nest. Yet the song which I heard on the bank of that hidden lake was not that of any

thrush. There were strange cadences in its depths that I have never heard in the music of any other bird, and it ended in a wild strain of the same kind which "charm'd magic casements . . . in faery lands forlorn" for another sweet singer so many years ago.

For a long time we both sat still as stones, hoping to glimpse the unknown bird, but he kept out of sight in the tangle of undergrowth which stretched away before us. Then, even as I feared that he had gone, the singer showed himself in a tangle of cane at the water's edge. His bill betrayed him as a warbler, but not one which I had ever seen before. For a minute he reminded me of the worm-eating warbler with its striped head, but this bird had a white stripe over the eye, and I finally identified him as the Swainson warbler, that rare bird which Dr. Bachman found near Charleston in the thirties, at the same time that he discovered the other warbler which bears his name. Like the Bachman, the Swainson for many years was never seen again, and remained practically unknown until rediscovered in the eighties. This one was grayish brown in color, with a reddish-brown crown, while the broad white line over and through his eye was his most obvious field mark.

II

The setting sun gleamed through the trees like a vast incandescent ruby as we approached the end of our journey. Crossing the last wide stretch of open marsh, we came to a dark clump of cypress trees. Swinging around the largest one, we found ourselves at the beginning of a hidden water-

way hardly broader than the width of the boat, which had been cut through the undergrowth and along which we pushed our little craft for over a mile until we reached Secret Island, one of the most beautiful of all the known islands of the Swamp.

As we landed, a mocking bird sang his afternoon song, the most delicious melody which I have ever heard one of those great performers give. I counted nine distinct staves of his song before he began to repeat, nor did he deign to imitate any other bird. His florid, sweet song reminded me of the Carolina wren, the brown thrasher, and the cardinal grosbeak, yet with a phrasing and beauty all its own.

Before the bird had finished singing, Uncle Billy, the caretaker of Secret Island, came out to welcome us. He was a little man less than five feet in height, with a martial white mustache, bristling white hair, a pair of wistful blue eyes, and a soft voice, and for months at a time lived in the Swamp without seeing a human face. Almost immediately we became fast friends. He had a tiny cabin about a hundred yards from the little bungalow between the two live oaks, where I was to stay, and there he, Pungie, and I pooled our knowledge of cooking and produced some very respectable meals.

"No, suh," said Uncle Billy, as we sat around his little cookstove after supper, "I don't have no time to get lonely here. There's always so much doin' with the birds comin' an' goin' an' the flowers a-bloomin' an' the different animiles on the island. Sometimes it seems as if I could hardly keep up with 'em all. Yes, suh," he went on, "I've lived in the Swamp all my life an' I reckon I'll die here. Onct I went away an' stayed a long, long time to see if I could get

used to livin' outside, but I wasn't happy a single minute till I got back."

"How long did you stay away, Uncle Billy?" I inquired.

"Two days, suh," he answered.

As we all sat together on a little bench in front of his cabin, while the soft dark spread like a slow stain across the marsh, I could see the belt of Orion, that mighty hunter, gleaming overhead, with Saiph the Sword Star shining at its side, while below, Sirius gleamed green in the fell jaw of the Dog. Then, well below that constellation, I glimpsed an unknown star close to the edge of the horizon, and for the first time in my life looked upon great Canopus, that wild, blue-white star of the desert which led Mahomet out to conquer half a world. Only in our southernmost states can it be seen.

While we were talking, a company of Florida barred owls began to hoot in the distance, their notes sounding like the deep-toned bay of some great dog—*who-who-who-who-who-ah*. All at once they broke into a perfect chorus of ghastly shrieks, like that company of fiends which Christian heard in the distance as he was crossing the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Then, across the narrow island, which is only half a mile wide, from the black depths of the Swamp came a deep booming bellow with a snoring note at the end, an indescribably wild, menacing, arrogant sound.

"That's an old bull 'gator," explained Uncle Billy. "He's the biggest thing in the Swamp an' listen to him say so," and once again the ground fairly trembled under the deep-toned roar of the great saurian, the challenge of the reptile to the mammal, almost as menacing as the roar of a lion.

At last it was time for me to turn in.

"Wait a minute an' I'll light a lantern for you," said the old man.

"I don't need a lantern, Uncle Billy," I assured him. "It's only a hundred yards to go."

"Son," said Uncle Billy, earnestly, "it ain't far, but if you go without a lantern you're liable never to get there. Do you see that chap on the wall?" and he pointed out to me the skin of a magnificent diamond-back rattler as wide as both of my hands, with twenty-one rattles and a button. "Well, suh," he continued, "them babies do their huntin' at night. I was goin' along after dark on the same path you're goin' to take, when I heard a rattlin'. It seemed to come from all sides o' me, an' I stood like I was froze an' yelled my head off for Rid Chesser, who was stoppin' with me. He came out with a torch, an' there, not a yard in front o' me, was coiled up the snake who owned that skin. Rid, he came as fast as he could, but if you leave it to me, he was over twenty years a-gettin' there. He hit the ol' snake a clip with his torch an' bruk his back. If I'd a moved one inch after that old-timer's alarm clock started, I'd be six feet underground to-night."

"Yes," Pungie advised me, "you take a lantern, an' when you go through that patch o' dwarf palmetto you step kind o' high an' proud."

Needless to say, I carried that lantern and probably stepped higher and prouder and slower than any man who ever visited Secret Island.

Just as I reached the little house where I was to sleep, there was a glow in the dim lavender sky, and very slowly the rim of a dull orange moon thrust its way above the

ghostly live oaks. As it rose higher in the sky the trees were silhouetted against the sepia and silver water, and a still, unearthly beauty spread like a mist over the whole landscape.

As I sat on the top step of the porch and stared unbelievingly at the loveliness spread out before me, the same mocking bird who had welcomed me at twilight began to sing low and sleepily. Then, as the moon climbed the sky, his song became louder, and I fell asleep that night in the pale gold moonlight with his wild, sweet cadences thrilling in my ears.

III

Early the next morning, just as dawn began to glow through the shrouded trees, I was awakened by another song, entirely different from that of the mocker, and in its way much more appealing. From the top of a great slash pine close to the house came a pure strain of exquisite tenderness. The sound had all of the silver, flutelike quality of that song of the field sparrow which floats across darkening pastures in the North. In it too was something of the pathos and spiritual quality which one hears in the song of the hermit thrush. Hurrying into my clothes, I slipped out of doors and identified the unknown singer as a pine-woods sparrow, one of the most beautiful singers of all his large family. As the light became stronger he flew away, and I heard him only that one morning, but his limpid, crystal-clear song is among my best memories of the Swamp.

On our way across the prairie that day, a long dark animal rushed into the water from a little island. Its heavily furred body was so sinuous as to seem to flow along the

ground as it shot through the bushes. Pungie identified it as an otter, and for a long time we pursued it by the line of air bubbles rising through the shallow water beneath which it swam.

As the sun rose higher and the marsh warmed up, Pungie suddenly pointed his finger toward a dim black mass showing in the bleached grass at the edge of a pool some ten feet across. I focussed my field glasses on the spot and with difficulty made out the outlines of a huge, serrated body, black as death. There was something abhorrent to me in the monstrous figure—perhaps an instinct handed down from the ages when mammals were fugitives and weaklings among the dragons of the prime.

As we came closer, I could see that the eyes of the great 'gator were closed. Dipping his pole into the water without a sound, Pungie drove the boat swiftly forward. Suddenly, when we were not more than thirty feet away, a turtle slipped off a log into the water with a splash. At the sound, two murky, fathomless eyes opened in the alligator's head and stared at us inscrutably. Then the crocodilian raised itself from the ground on four bowed legs, with an awkwardness which disguised the real swiftness of its movement.

Once I saw a toad approach an unsuspecting insect. Instead of hopping, it stalked forward on bent legs with a stealthy, swift, menacing movement. As I watched the alligator move, he reminded me of a great hunting toad. The body was carried high on bent, tense legs which could shoot it forward with unexpected swiftness, and as I looked I was glad that I was not within reach of those black jaws.

In another instant the great reptile had reached the edge

of the pool and slipped into it with hardly more of a splash than a turtle would have made. For a moment the end of his muzzle and his two protruding eyes showed above the water, and then disappeared.

Our next meeting with this dark king of the marshland was out on the open water, when we saw what seemed to be two knots on a sunken log some distance ahead.

"That's a big ol' he-one," said Pungie, and, as we approached, the black dots suddenly disappeared. Immediately Pungie stooped until his head was close to the water, and gave several deep grunts, an imitation of the love notes of an amorous alligator. At once the ominous knobs showed again, but went under as the boat reached them.

"Let me take the pole and give him a poke. Perhaps he'll come up again," I said rashly.

"Now I wouldn't never go pokin' no ol' bull 'gator. Howsomever, do as you like," objected Pungie.

With the idiocy of ignorance and relying upon divers authorities which state that alligators never attack humans, I thrust the pole down until it grated upon the ridged back of the monster hidden beneath the brown water, hoping that he might come to the surface again. He did! As I prodded the ridged back, it was as if a depth bomb had suddenly exploded beside me, as, with a tremendous splash, the bent, ten-foot body of the alligator shot above the surface like a black bass breaking water. I had one glimpse of a huge lashing tail, and then two grim jaws clashed together so close to the boat that they splashed water all over my face as the great 'gator fell back with a crash, nearly swamping our tiny craft.

For once Pungie showed speed.

"This ain't no place fer you an' me," he exclaimed, snatching the push-pole from my nerveless hands, and with a mighty shove he shot the boat a dozen yards away from the mass of foam and bubbles the alligator had left behind.

Fifty yards farther on he came to a halt and regarded me severely.

"Don't you never do that again," he commanded. "That ol' bull was snappin' fer your hands. If he'd caught 'em he'd a pulled you under an' rolled you until you was drownded dead. He'd a hid you up under some bank until you softened up a bit an' then he'd a et you. Don't you never poke no 'gator again."

"Well, Pungie," I gasped, "if you feel that way about it, I never will"—and I never have.

Pungie told me of a similar experience with a porpoise.

"They're like 'gators," he said; "kind o' sudden. Once when I was fishin' with Zeb Kahler at Limb Sound we seed two porpoises comin' toward us. They was goin' under the boat like they allus do, an' I told Zeb I was goin' to jab one of 'em with the oar. 'Don't you,' says he—but I did. Each one of 'em was about ten feet long, an' I poked the front one right in the middle o' his fat back. The next thing we knew we were lyin' in a mud flat fifty feet away, with our boat upside down beyond us. Both o' them darn porpoises had rose up under us an' shot us through the air, boat an' all, like as if we'd been blowed up by a torpedo."

The very next day after my experience with the alligator I had another reptilian adventure that was even more trying to my nerves. Pungie and I had been searching for the trail which led to Bugaboo Island, which was reputed to be haunted and where the ivory-billed woodpecker was said

to be found. I was sitting in the bow and bent my head as Pungie pushed the boat through a fringe of bushes. Even as I did so there was a thud behind me, as if some one had dropped a piece of heavy fire hose into the boat, and I heard Pungie give a gasp. Then at my back came that sound which no man born of woman may hear unmoved—the fierce, thick hiss of a snake. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw the head of a monstrous serpent rising from the bottom of the boat not a foot away. As I stared helplessly at it, the grim mouth slowly opened, showing the white lining which marks the dreaded cottonmouth moccasin. The snake had been basking in the upper branches of a bush and, startled by our approach, had tried to slip into the water, only to land in our boat.

It was the largest water snake that I have ever seen and must have been fully five feet in length and thicker around than my forearm, dingy brown in color with dark blotches showing faintly along its back.

I had nothing in my hands, and my legs were so cramped that if I tried to stand up I should undoubtedly fall out of the boat. Moreover, the snake was so close to me that any attempt on my part to move would probably be met by a dart from the curved, movable fangs I could see faintly showing in the white gum of the upper jaw.

I sat still, very still, watching the snake over my shoulder. It was so close to me that I could plainly see the curious pit between the nostril and the eye, which is found also in the rattlesnake and the copperhead and which gives their fatal family the name of pit vipers. The glassy, lidless eyes with their curious oval pupil, the hall mark of a venomous serpent, had an expression of cold menace quite as threat-

ening as the fierce glare that shows in the eyes of the larger Carnivora when enraged.

A diamond-backed rattler, with its higher tension and more irritable temperament, in a similar situation would undoubtedly have bitten me. A moccasin, however, although it will open its mouth and hiss when approached, rarely strikes unless actually touched. Once the great cold-blood turned its hissing head toward Pungie, who gripped his pole like a pole vaulter ready to break a record.

For what seemed to me a long time I sat motionless, until at last the menacing mouth with its white satin lining closed, the great heart-shaped head thrust itself over the gunwale of the boat, and the monstrous body flowed after it smooth as oil, and, with scarcely a ripple, disappeared in the water.

"I don't mind a bear," confided Pungie to me a few minutes later, "though some folks get flustered when a big she-one charges, grittin' her teeth an' smashin' down the bresh. A big ol' rattlesnake or a moccasin, howsomever, gets my goat every time, they look so kind o' unfriendly like."

On our way back we came to a dead cypress, white as bleached bone. On one of its limbs, perched in a row, sat six black vultures, my first sight of that grim bird. Although smaller than the turkey vulture and with less expanse of wing, the black vulture is yet a heavier bird. The sextette showed no signs of alarm even when we came close, but sat regarding us fixedly out of their red eyes like a dark company of witches.

Beyond the vultures we found a shaded pool from which Pungie dipped me a drink of the celebrated Okefinokee water, a rich golden brown in color, with a curiously soft,

spicy taste. After drinking it for a few days I came to like it better than any other water. In the early part of the century, captains of sailing vessels used to fill their casks from the upper reaches of St. Mary's River, which rises in the marsh, and at the end of a two years' voyage the water would be as pure and potable as when first used.

My days and nights on the hidden island and in the heart of the great marsh passed all too swiftly. There was fishing, such fishing as I had never expected to find on earth—large-mouthed bass, jack, bream, blackfish, and perch. The flowers and the trees were new to me and all strangely beautiful, and everywhere were the birds of the South—red-bellied woodpeckers, blue-gray gnat catchers, prothonotary warblers all gray and gold, and a score of others whose songs and habits were a continual delight.

Then, all too soon, came the day when I had to leave those lonely wilds and go back to live among the tame folk.

"I wisht, I wisht that you'd spend a month here with me," said Uncle Billy, wistfully. "We'd have such a good time together watchin' the birds an' flowers an' critters."

"I'll come back, Uncle Billy," I promised.

"Yes," he said. "Once drink swamp water an' you'll allers come back, but—I may not be here when you come."

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

The key-note of this essay is in the sentence "there flowed into my blood that joy of the wilderness." Where was this wilderness? Can you find it on a map?

What things in it gave him joy? What things terrified him? Does he make you feel the joy and the terror? The power to feel keenly and to put your feeling into fit words is what makes literature.

The descriptions in this essay are worth study. He speaks of the dried grass and the water: you or I would say the grass was yellow and the water brown. This is his way: "The bleached grass of the banks showed a pale ochre against the copper-brown water." See how he chooses exact words to describe color. Note too the descriptions of bird songs, first the warbler: "A song bubbled out, full of crystalline runs and trills, yet with a loud ringing sweetness in it." The sparrow's song was different. "From the top of a great slash pine came a pure strain of exquisite tenderness. The song had all of the silver flutelike quality of that song of the field sparrow. In it, too, was something of the pathetic and spiritual quality which one hears in the song of the hermit thrush." Find other good bits of description.

Perhaps the best thing this essay can do for you is to set you writing. Try observing something in nature: first look at it intently, to see *everything;* then find the right words to describe it. Here are possible subjects:

A Brook. (Its sound, its motion, the grasses beside it, the tiny plants on its edge, its bottom.)

A Tree. (Its general shape; its trunk—size, color, surface; its branches; its leaves; the sound the wind makes.)

A Pigeon. (General appearance, color of back, neck, breast, feet, eyes; its walk; its flight; sounds it makes; its behavior.)

A Squirrel in the Park, similarly studied.

A Patch of Wild Flowers. (General appearance; description of flower, with exact words for colors; fragrance; insect visitors.)

The Song of a Cat Bird, or a Mocking Bird.

AN INTRODUCTION OF TWO PERSONS

EDWARD BOK

EDWARD BOK

Edward Bok, editor, author, and publisher, was born in Holland in 1863; he came to America at the age of seven. The family settled in Brooklyn, where the boy attended the public schools. They were very poor, and at twelve Edward left school to become an office boy for the Western Union Telegraph Company. Some of the great men of the day, such as William H. Vanderbilt, railroad president and millionaire; Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, and Thomas A. Edison were frequent visitors in the office. Bok wanted to learn how these men had risen in life, so he saved his money to buy an encyclopedia, in which he read the lives of successful men. Determined to better his own position, he studied shorthand at evening school, and became a capable stenographer. This enabled him to do reporting for a newspaper in the evening, in addition to his office work by day. He had become interested in the writings of the New England poets, and at eighteen, when he had his first vacation, he determined to go East and see these writers. Arriving in Boston he at once sent a note to Oliver Wendell Holmes. It must have been a well-written note, for Doctor Holmes replied by inviting him to breakfast, afterward giving him a letter of introduction to Longfellow. He visited Phillips Brooks, Louisa M. Alcott, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, each of whom gave him an autograph.

Returning to Brooklyn, he formed a partnership with another boy to publish a periodical, *The Brooklyn Magazine*. For this he secured Henry Ward Beecher and T. De Witt Talmage, then the most famous preachers in the United States, as contributors. This work was done in the evenings; by day he still worked in the telegraph office. Later he took a position as stenographer with the publishing house of Charles Scribner's Sons. Here he came into contact with many writers. One day he was sent to carry some proofs to Robert Louis Stevenson, and waited while Stevenson went carefully over the work.

While Mr. Bok was with Scribners he had, as usual, a second occupation. This was the preparation of a page of articles of interest to women, which appeared each week in a number of newspapers. He also wrote a weekly letter on new books, called "Bok's Literary Leaves." These articles attracted the attention of Mr. Cyrus H. K. Curtis, the publisher of *The Ladies' Home Journal,* and led him to offer Bok the position of editor of his magazine. And so, in 1889, Bok went to Philadelphia to enter a new and wider field. Under his management the magazine increased greatly in circulation. He engaged the greatest writers of the day as contributors, men like W. D. Howells, Rudyard Kipling, Mark Twain, Joel Chandler Harris, A. Conan Doyle. For him Jane Addams wrote the story of Hull House, and Helen Keller the story of her life. He secured the best architects to draw plans for artistic small houses, and sold these plans at a very low price, with the result that all over the country beautiful homes were built instead of ugly ones. He gained permission of the owners of famous paintings to have them reproduced in color for his magazine, and thus carried a knowledge of art into American homes.

In 1919 he resigned his position as editor, and busied himself in various forms of public service, and in writing. Believing strongly in the need of some measure to prevent war, he offered a prize of $50,000 for the best plan to promote international peace. Of his writings, the best known is his autobiography, called *The Americanization of Edward Bok*. This received the Pulitzer Prize as the best biography of the year. It is also published in an abridged form with the title *A Dutch Boy Fifty Years After*. It is a fascinating book. Another book of his well worth reading is *The Man from Maine,* a biography of Cyrus H. K. Curtis. Mr. Bok's death occurred in January, 1930.

AN INTRODUCTION OF TWO PERSONS*

EDWARD BOK

Along an island in the North Sea, five miles from the Dutch coast, stretches a dangerous ledge of rocks that has proved the graveyard of many a vessel sailing that turbulent sea. On this island once lived a group of men who, as each vessel was wrecked, looted the vessel and murdered those of the crew who reached shore. The government of the Netherlands decided to exterminate the island pirates, and for the job King William selected a young lawyer at The Hague.

"I want you to clean up that island," was the royal order. It was a formidable job for a young man of twenty-odd years. By royal proclamation he was made mayor of the island, and within a year, a court of law being established, the young attorney was appointed judge; and in that dual capacity he "cleaned up" the island.

The young man now decided to settle on the island, and began to look around for a home. It was a grim place, barren of tree or living green of any kind; it was as if a man had been exiled to Siberia. Still, argued the young mayor, an ugly place is ugly only because it is not beautiful. And beautiful he determined this island should be.

One day the young mayor-judge called together his council. "We must have trees," he said; "we can make this island a spot of beauty if we will!" But the practical sea-faring

*From *The Americanization of Edward Bok;* copyright by Charles Scribner's Sons.

men demurred; the little money they had was needed for matters far more urgent than trees.

"Very well," was the mayor's decision—and little they guessed what the words were destined to mean—"I will do it myself." And that year he planted one hundred trees, the first the island had ever seen.

"Too cold," said the islanders; "the severe north winds and storms will kill them all."

"Then I will plant more," said the unperturbed mayor. And for the fifty years that he lived on the island he did so. He planted trees each year; and, moreover, he had deeded to the island government land which he turned into public squares and parks, and where each spring he set out shrubs and plants.

Moistened by the salt mist the trees did not wither, but grew prodigiously. In all that expanse of turbulent sea—and only those who have seen the North Sea in a storm know how turbulent it can be—there was not a foot of ground on which the birds, storm-driven across the water-waste, could rest in their flight. Hundreds of dead birds often covered the surface of the sea. Then one day the trees had grown tall enough to look over the sea, and, spent and driven, the first birds came and rested in their leafy shelter. And others came and found protection, and gave their gratitude vent in song. Within a few years so many birds had discovered the trees in this new island home that they attracted the attention not only of the native islanders but also of the people on the shore five miles distant, and the island became famous as the home of the rarest and most beautiful birds. So grateful were the birds for their resting-place that they chose one end of the island as a special spot

for the laying of their eggs and the raising of their young, and they fairly peopled it. It was not long before ornithologists from various parts of the world came to "Eggland," as the farthermost point of the island came to be known, to see the marvellous sight, not of thousands but of hundreds of thousands of bird-eggs.

A pair of storm-driven nightingales had now found the island and mated there; their wonderful notes thrilled even the souls of the natives; and as dusk fell upon the seabound strip of land the women and children would come to "the square" and listen to the evening notes of the birds of golden song. The two nightingales soon grew into a colony, and within a few years so rich was the island in its nightingales that over to the Dutch coast and throughout the land and into other countries spread the fame of "The Island of Nightingales."

Meantime, the young mayor-judge, grown to manhood, had kept on planting trees each year, setting out his shrubbery and plants, until their verdure now beautifully shaded the quaint, narrow lanes, and transformed into cool wooded roads what once had been only barren sun-baked wastes. Artists began to hear of the place and brought their canvases, and on the walls of hundreds of homes throughout the world hang to-day bits of the beautiful lanes and wooded spots of "The Island of Nightingales." The American artist, William M. Chase, took his pupils there almost annually. "In all the world to-day," he declared to the students, as they exclaimed at the natural cool restfulness of the island, "there is no more beautiful place."

The trees are now majestic in their height of forty or more feet, for it is nearly a hundred years since the young

attorney went to the island and planted the first tree; today the churchyard where he lies is a bower of cool green, with the trees that he planted dropping their moisture on the lichen-covered stone on his grave.

This much did one man do. But he did more.

After he had been on the barren island two years he went to the mainland one day, and brought back with him a bride. It was a bleak place for a bridal home, but the young wife had the qualities of the husband. "While you raise your trees," she said, "I will raise our children." And within a score of years the young bride sent thirteen happy-faced, well-brought-up children over that island, and there was reared a home such as is given to few. Said a man who subsequently married a daughter of that home: "It was such a home that once you had been in it, you felt you must be of it, and that if you couldn't marry one of the daughters you would have been glad to have married the cook."

One day when the children had grown to man's and woman's estate the mother called them all together and said to them, "I want to tell you the story of your father and of this island," and she told them the simple story that is written here.

"And now," she said, "as you go out into the world I want each of you to take with you the spirit of your father's work, and each in your own way and place, to do as he has done: make you the world a bit more beautiful and better because you have been in it. That is your mother's message to you."

The first son to leave the island home went with a band of hardy men to South Africa, where they settled and became known as "the Boers." Tirelessly they worked at the

colony until towns and cities sprang up and a new nation came into being: The Transvaal Republic. The son became secretary of state of the new country, and to-day the United States of South Africa bears tribute, in part, to the mother's message to "make the world a bit more beautiful and better."

The second son left home for the Dutch mainland, where he took charge of a small parish; and when he had finished his work he was mourned by king and peasant as one of the leading clergymen of his time and people.

A third son, scorning his own safety, plunged into the boiling surf on one of those nights of terror so common to that coast, rescued a half-dead sailor, carried him to his father's house, and brought him back to a life of usefulness that gave the world a record of imperishable value. For the half-drowned sailor was Heinrich Schliemann, the famous explorer of the dead cities of Troy.

The first daughter now left the island nest; to her inspiration her husband owed, at his life's close, a shelf of works in philosophy which to-day are among the standard books of their class.

The second daughter worked beside her husband until she brought him to be regarded as one of the ablest preachers of his land, speaking for more than forty years the message of man's betterment.

To another son it was given to sit wisely in the councils of his land; another followed the footsteps of his father. Another daughter, refusing marriage for duty, ministered unto and made a home for one whose eyes could see not.

So they went out into the world, the girls and boys of that island home, each carrying the story of their father's

simple but beautiful work and the remembrance of their mother's message. Not one from that home but did well his or her work in the world; some greater, some smaller, but each left behind the traces of a life well spent.

And, as all good work is immortal, so to-day all over the world goes on the influence of this one man and one woman whose life on that little Dutch island changed its barren rocks to a bower of verdure, a home for the birds and the song of the nightingale. The grandchildren have gone to the four corners of the globe, and are now the generation of workers—some in the far East Indies; others in Africa; still others in our own land of America. But each has tried, according to the talents given, to carry out the message of that day, to tell the story of the grandfather's work; just as it is told here by the author of this book, who, in the efforts of his later years, has tried to carry out, so far as opportunity has come to him, the message of his grandmother:

"Make you the world a bit more beautiful and better because you have been in it."

COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

This essay forms the introduction to Mr. Bok's autobiography; the "two persons" were his grandfather and grandmother. It is a masterpiece of condensation: we have the story of an island, the lives of two people, and of the second generation—and all in six pages.

What was the first achievement of the young lawyer?

What was his second undertaking? What were the two results of this?

What were the chief traits of character shown by this man?

What was the mother's part in the story?

What message did she give to her children?

How far has the influence of this man and woman extended?

In what ways did Edward Bok carry out the injunctions of his grandmother? (Read the sketch of his life.)

What do you consider the chief lesson that may be drawn from his life?

Do you notice any difference, in subject or in style, between this essay and the others in this book? This is really a reflective rather than a familiar essay.

ability to think seriously. It should be read with care. In it one of the leading intellectual men of our time sets forth his views upon an important subject. Each sentence is worth weighing.

What qualities, according to Doctor Eliot, were possessed by the immigrant?

What three motives have led immigrants to come to America?

What effect has been produced on the American by his environment?

What is the attitude of the genuine American toward government?

Does the American believe in absolute freedom for the individual? (See page 299.)

Does he believe in law observance?

Finally, what is an American? Write a concise definition, based on this essay.

Are there any statements in this essay with which you do not agree?

From this essay can you infer any of the mental traits of the author? Does he appear to be well informed? Is he narrow-minded? Does the order in which he treats his subject show anything? Is he careful, or exact, in his statements, or not? Is he prejudiced against certain classes of our population? Himself of old New England stock, does he hold that to make an American at least two generations are necessary?

Words worth learning: nonconformist, environment, malignant, abhorrent, heterogeneous.

This essay is taken from a book called *A Late Harvest,* made up of papers written when the author was between eighty and ninety years of age. The first paper in the book tells how he kept his health and his mental powers intact even to old age. Another paper is on the advantage of being a poor man's son. Both are worth reading; they are simpler in style than the essay here given.

This is an example of the reflective essay. In this the author chooses a serious subject, and gives his deepest thought upon

it. Such essays, naturally, are less entertaining than the familiar essay, but they may prove more profitable. One of the most famous writers of reflective essays was Francis Bacon. His *Essays,* published in a single small volume, deal with such subjects as Truth, Friendship, Riches, Travel. If you have a mind that is inclined to serious thinking, you will find Bacon's essays made for you. Among American authors the chief writer of reflective essays is Ralph Waldo Emerson. He is the author of half a dozen volumes of essays, of which the following are especially recommended: "Self-Reliance," in *Essays, First Series;* "Manners," in *Essays, Second Series;* "Culture," in *The Conduct of Life.*

READING LIST OF MODERN ESSAYS

COLLECTIONS OF ESSAYS

Atlantic Classics (First Series)..... E. Sedgwick, ed.
Atlantic Classics (Second Series).... E. Sedgwick, ed.
American Essays..... E. E. Hale, ed.
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Modern Essays and Stories..... F. H. Law, ed.
Modern Familiar Essays..... W. M. Tanner, ed.
Oxford Book of American Essays... Brander Matthews, ed.
Present-Day Essays..... E. V. Knickerbocker, ed.

INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS

Abbott, C. C.:
Days Out of Doors.
Freedom of the Fields.

Baker, Ray Stannard (David Grayson):
The Friendly Road.
Adventures in Friendship.
Adventures in Contentment.
Great Possessions.

Barrie, J. M.:
Courage.
Margaret Ogilvy.

Beebe, William:
Jungle Peace.
The Edge of the Jungle.
Jungle Days.
The Arcturus Adventure.

Belloc, Hilaire:
On Nothing.
On Anything.
On Everything.
On Something.

Benchley, Robert:
Of All Things!

Bennett, Arnold:
How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day.
The Human Machine.
Literary Taste and How to Form It.
Things That Have Interested Me.
Self and Self Management.

Benson, Arthur Christopher:
The Thread of Gold.
From a College Window.
Altar Fires.
At Large.
Along the Road.
Beside Still Waters.
The Silent Isle.

Bergengren, Ralph:
Comforts of Home.
The Perfect Gentleman.

Birrell, Augustine:
Men, Women and Books.
Obiter Dicta.

Black, Hugh:
Friendship.
Work.

Bolles, Frank:
At the North of Bearcamp Water.
Land of Lingering Snow.

Briggs, Le Baron R.:
School, College and Character.

Brooks, Charles S.:
Chimney-Pot Papers.
Hints to Pilgrims.
Like Summer's Cloud.
There's Pippins and Cheese to Come.
Journeys to Bagdad.

Broun, Heywood:
Seeing Things at Night.
Pieces of Hate.

Burgess, Gelett:
The Romance of the Commonplace.

Burroughs, John:
Birds and Bees.
Far and Near.
Signs and Seasons.
Ways of Nature.
Under the Maples.
Accepting the Universe.
Indoor Studies.
Locusts and Wild Honey.
Wake-Robin.
Winter Sunshine.

Canby, Henry Seidel:
Definitions.
Saturday Papers.

Chesterton, Gilbert K.:
Alarms and Discursions.
All Things Considered.
Tremendous Trifles.
Use of Diversity.

The Defendant.
A Miscellany of Men.
Defense of Nonsense.

Cobb, Irvin S.:
Speaking of Operations.

Colby, Frank Moore:
Imaginary Obligations.
Constrained Attitudes.
The Margin of Hesitation.

Conrad, Joseph:
Mirror of the Sea.
Notes on Life and Letters.
Last Essays.

Crothers, Samuel M.:
The Gentle Reader.
The Pardoner's Wallet.
By the Christmas Fire.
Among Friends.
The Pleasures of an Absentee Landlord.
The Dame School of Experience.
The Cheerful Giver.

Curtis, G. W.:
From the Easy Chair.
Prue and I.

Eaton, Walter Prichard:
Barn Doors and Byways.
Green Trails and Upland Pastures.
Penguin Persons and Peppermints.

Eliot, C. W.:
American Contributions to Civilization.
The Durable Satisfactions of Life.

Emerson, R. W.:
Conduct of Life.
Essays, First and Second Series.
Society and Solitude.

Galsworthy, John:
A Motley.
The Little Man and Other Satires.
A Sheaf.
Another Sheaf.
The Inn of Tranquillity.
Castles in Spain.

Grahame, Kenneth:
Dream Days.
Pagan Papers.

Hearn, Lafcadio:
A Japanese Miscellany.
Out of the East.

Hendrick, Ellwood:
Percolator Papers.

Holliday, Robert Cortes:
Walking-Stick Papers.
Broome Street Straws.
Men and Books and Cities.
Turns About Town.

Holmes, O. W.:
Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.
Over the Teacups.
Pages from an Odd Volume of Life.
Poet at the Breakfast-Table.
Professor at the Breakfast-Table.

Howells, W. D.:
Criticism and Fiction.
London Films.
My Literary Passions.
Suburban Sketches.

Hudson, W. H.:
A Traveller in Little Things.

Hunt, Leigh:
Men, Women and Books.

Table Talk.
Wit and Humor.

Jefferies, Richard:
Story of My Heart.
Field and Hedgerow.

Jerome, J. K.:
Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow.

Johnson, Alvin:
John Stuyvesant, Ancestor.

Kilmer, Joyce:
The Circus and Other Essays and Fugitive Pieces.

Kirkland, Winifred:
The Joys of Being a Woman.
The View Vertical.

Leacock, Stephen:
Literary Lapses.
Moonbeams from the Larger Lunacy.
My Discovery of England.
Over the Footlights.
Frenzied Fiction.

Le Gallienne, Richard:
The Highway to Happiness.
Prose Fancies.
Vanishing Roads.

Lowell, J. R.:
Among My Books.
Fireside Travels.
My Study Windows.

Lucas, Edward Verrall:
Fireside and Sunshine.
Loiterer's Harvest.
Adventures and Enthusiasms.
Giving and Receiving.
A Little of Everything.

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